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# Jerusalem impasse

Despite Egyptian objections, Netanyahu did not soften his position on the Har Homa settlement. **Nevine Khalil** reports

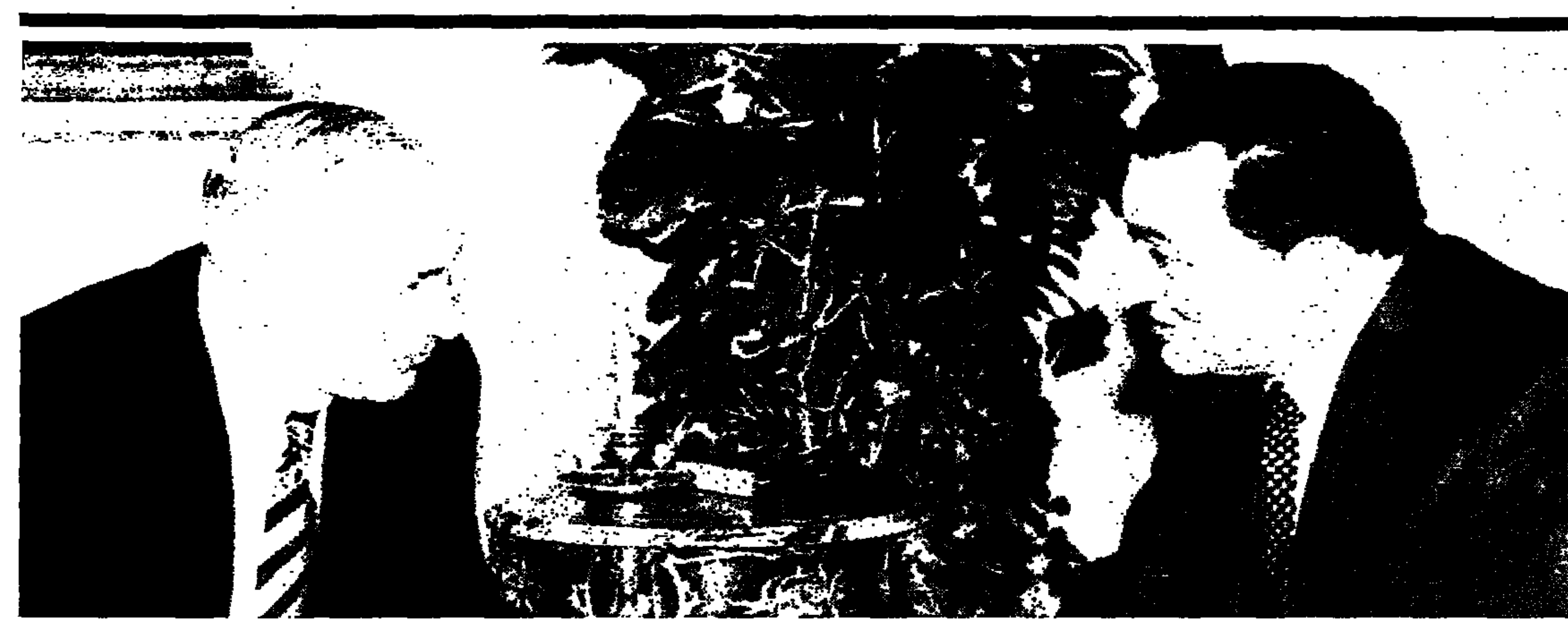


photo: Reuters

President Hosni Mubarak and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu affirmed their commitment to peace yesterday but publicly disagreed on whether the Oslo agreements bar Israel from building a Jewish quarter in Arab East Jerusalem.

Following nearly two hours of talks at the Presidential Palace in Heliopolis, Mubarak and Netanyahu addressed a joint news conference, during which the Israeli prime minister boasted that during his eight months in office he had done more for the Palestinians in Jerusalem than any previous Israeli government. He also claimed that the 1993 Oslo agreements with the Palestinians specifically excluded Jerusalem.

"Oslo is very clear," Netanyahu said. "It does not deal at all with the question of Jerusalem. It makes clear that any action regarding a change of status involves the West Bank and Gaza. It specifically excludes Jerusalem."

He argued that Oslo touched on Jerusalem only "in the sense that in the interim period there should be no governmental activity on the part of the Palestinian Authority in Jerusalem."

Rejecting this interpretation, Mubarak responded that Article Five of the Oslo agreements "says that the remaining issues, including Jerusalem, Jewish settlements, security arrangements, borders, relations, cooperation with other neighbours and other issues shall be negotiated at the permanent status negotiations."

Mubarak added that he had hoped the situation in Jerusalem would have remained unchanged until the opening of the final status negotiations.

Asked if Egypt had considered taking countermeasures, Mubarak replied: "Our main concern is a fair and lasting peace. We have to work so that the peace process can continue, so as to reach a permanent peace in this part of the world. We are not thinking of taking measures this way or the other. Our measures are to push the peace forward on a fair basis."

Answering another question on Yasser Arafat's threat to immediately announce the establishment of a Palestinian state, Mubarak said: "I would like to say that Palestine is a permanent member of the Arab League. Therefore, all the Arab countries have declared their recognition of Palestine as a member-state of the Arab League. But if this [Arafat's declaration] happens now, we should discuss it with our Arab friends."

Netanyahu recounted his government's actions in implementing the Oslo Accords. "We redeployed in Hebron, as we promised. We have released the women prisoners, something the previous government promised to do but did not. We effectively lifted the closure [of the Palestinian territories]. There are now 55,000 permits for Palestinian workers, but only 46,000 were picked up. There are more permits for Palestinian workers than Palestinians picking up the opportunity. We also transferred to the Palestinian Authority the remaining money on the tax rebate. This had been held up for a long time."

These actions, Netanyahu maintained, "make it clear to any fair-minded observer that we have a commitment to peace."

He claimed the Palestinians were to blame for the current situation. "We expect the other side to show commitment to peace. I will not hide from you that we expect to see things fulfilled on the Palestinian side that we haven't seen so far. We would like to see the complete revision of the Palestinian charter. We would like to see action against terrorists who are involved in some of the worst outrages against Israel. They shouldn't be roaming around freely. They should be put in jail. We would like to see the collection of illegal weapons and we would also like to have strict adherence to the provisions of Oslo."

Declaring that he wanted a bilateral peace, Netanyahu said he was aware that Jerusalem "is a point of great emotion and great contention." He claimed that his government, "in the eight months of power, has done things that no other Israeli government has done for the Palestinian population in Jerusalem.

"We have allocated 150 million shekels [$50 million] for the coming year to build infrastructure in order to fill the gaps that were created by previous governments, to reduce these gaps for the benefit of all Jerusalem residents, beginning with the Arab residents. No one has ever done this before. We have decided not only to [build] infrastructure in the Arab neighbourhood in Jerusalem, but... to enable the construction of 3,015 housing units for Arab residents of Jerusalem over the next three years. At the same time, the decision we took on Har Homa will enable the construction of about 2,500 units for the Jewish residents. This means that we will facilitate the construction of more housing for the Arab residents of Jerusalem than for the Jewish residents."

Netanyahu maintained that the Jewish quarter of Har Homa will be constructed on "land that is 75 per cent private Jewish land. We are not expropriating huge chunks of Palestinian land, contrary to what is being said."

The prime minister's vision of Jerusalem was as "a city of peace, a city for both Arab and Jewish residents... Jerusalem is a living city, not a frozen entity, with a real need for residents, both Arabs and Jews alike. So this is our policy and it's a policy of peace."

Asked whether his action would discourage other countries from joining the peace process, Netanyahu replied that its importance had been exaggerated. "The construction is a natural thing for us to do," he said. "I stress again that this neighbourhood is on 75 per cent Jewish land and that we are going to build more housing units for the Palestinians."

Netanyahu claimed that his "commitment to peace is iron-clad... We have, of course, our own position. I don't deny it. But that position includes the continued pursuit of peace with the Palestinians; we hope we can broaden the talks of peace to include others."

Mubarak, asked whether he was convinced by Netanyahu's explanation, responded: "I cannot tell you that I am convinced. I tell you that I am afraid that this may create problems in the future." He said he would pursue the matter with Yasser Arafat when he arrived on Thursday evening or Friday morning. He also pledged to raise the issue at his meeting with President Clinton in Washington on Monday.

A reporter reminded Mubarak that following Netanyahu's first visit to Cairo in July, he had said he did not trust him. "I did not mean that I do not trust Mr Netanyahu as a man," Mubarak explained. "But sometimes I have felt that there is no implementation of previous agreements to make us trust that the peace process will proceed forward."

He had, he said, had a long talk with Netanyahu about the peace process and ways to make it move forward. "I know it [Jerusalem] is a warm issue, but I hope it can be solved in a convenient way for both sides, and does not create problems and lower the tone until we come up with something to help the process move forward."

Netanyahu said the Egyptian-Israeli commitment to peace "is the pivot of the entire peace process in the Middle East. We spoke about how to alleviate the tensions and get on with pending matters as well as how to continue to improve our relations, including economic relations."

Netanyahu also affirmed commitment to UN Security Council Resolution 242 of 1967. "All Israeli governments, and we are no exception, have said that they recognise 242 and 338 [of 1973]. There are obviously different interpretations by Israel and the Arab negotiating partners of exactly what they mean, but we went to Madrid on the basis of 242 and 338. This remains a basis for future negotiations."

Mubarak said the peace process was persistently confronted with problems. "As long as there is insistence on the peace process, we will meet many problems, but the peace process must continue and we must work on overcoming the obstacles because there is no alternative to the road to peace."

Netanyahu, asked about his decision — made on the eve of his visit to Cairo — to shut down four Palestinian offices in Jerusalem, argued that their closure was in line with the tenets of the Oslo agreements. "Institutions relate to a very specific provision of Oslo that says the Palestinian Authority cannot have in this period any governmental activity or institutions in Jerusalem," he said. However, the Palestinians could appeal to the Israeli courts "and argue that we are wrong and that these are not Palestinian Authority offices. If they succeed in convincing the courts they will remain open."

Mubarak was also asked about the fate of Azzam Azzam, an Israeli-Arab arrested in Cairo on charges of spying. He told reporters: "The case is before the courts. We have no authority to exclude it from the courts." Until the case has been heard, "we are not authorised, even our constitution does not give us the right, to do anything or to release him."

**The struggle for Jebel Abu Ghneim**

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## Moussa's US offensive

FOREIGN Minister Amr Moussa launched a "charm offensive" against the powerful financial community in the US to convince investors that Egypt is serious about economic reform and linking up with the global economy, the French news agency AFP reported.

Addressing a meeting sponsored by the American Chamber of Commerce in Washington on Tuesday, Moussa complained that the confidence of foreign investors continues to lag behind economic reality, Egypt's proven commitment to economic liberalisation and the privatisation of state enterprises.

Moussa also stressed that Egypt is expected to seal a free trade agreement with the European Union within the next few months, is improving ties with South East Asia and fostering regional economic cooperation.

Moussa is accompanied by a retinue of Egyptian businessmen on a two-week tour that includes visits to Houston and Washington, where President Mubarak is expected within two days.

Several US businessmen expressed optimism about Egypt's economy especially with the growing dynamism of the private sector.

## One capital

PALESTINIAN leader Yasser Arafat, currently in the US, raised the issue of the projected Israeli Har Homa settlement in East Jerusalem during an informal meeting with the 15 UN Security Council members yesterday. The meeting preceded a formal debate in the Council on the settlement.

Arafat also met UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the president of the UN General Assembly, Razali Ismail, during a tour of the United Nations, and held discussions with Jewish community leaders on the forthcoming negotiations on the future of the West Bank.

At a National Press Club luncheon in Washington on Tuesday, Arafat suggested that Jerusalem could be a capital of two states, after the manner of Rome and the Vatican. (see p.4)

## Patent battle

THE CHAMBER of chemical industries, a branch of the Egyptian Federation of Industries, has appealed for government intervention in a dispute over the implementation of GATT regulations on drug patents, reports **Aziza Sami**. International companies are demanding patent protection for their inventions in Egypt before the end of the transition period prescribed by GATT, which expires in 2005.

A delegation from the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association (IFPMA) put its case to key government officials and the US Egyptian Presidents' Council this week.

However, there are fears that early implementation of the regulations would lead to large price rises.

Galal Ghorab, chairman of the Holding Company for Pharmaceuticals, Chemicals and Hospital Instruments said that the multinationals' aggressive campaign was in itself in violation of GATT articles "stating that advanced nations should assist developing companies in upgrading their economies and infrastructures before adopting regulations which govern free competition, such as patent laws." (see p.6)

## INSIDE



# Breakthrough or nightmare?

Egyptian intellectual and religious figures view the possible cloning of humans in the future as anti-religious and unethical. They spoke to **Shaden Shehab**

The cloning of a female sheep in Scotland has stunned the world because it raised the possibility that humans may be cloned in the future. This possibility was condemned in advance by many Egyptian intellectual and religious figures who view it as tampering with nature that runs against religion and ethics. They called it a disaster and a nightmare.

The sheep, named Dolly, was cloned by a scientific team from the Roslin Institute in Edinburgh, who took a cell from a six-year-old ewe's udder, put it into an unfertilised egg from which the DNA had been emptied and adding thus a full dose of genes from a single mature cell. An electricity spark started the egg dividing, resulting in embryos which were transplanted in the womb of the surrogate mother sheep. Ian Wilmut, the embryologist who led the team, said that although cloning humans may become possible in the future, "all of us would find that offensive."

The breakthrough technology, which was compared in the West to the discovery of nuclear energy, received little coverage in the local press. It is possible that writers feared offending the deeply-rooted religious sensibility of average Egyptians.

Cloning humans would be "a catastrophe and a very dangerous operation," Mustafa Mahmoud, a writer on Islamic affairs, told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "It is against religion because we would be creating human beings as we wish."

But Mahmoud did not object to the cloning of animals. Indeed, he said, it could be beneficial "by increasing the food supply and producing biopharmaceuticals."

Abdel-Sabour Shahin, a professor of Islamic studies, said cloning humans would amount to "tampering with nature that would result in tyranny... It would abolish the individuality of human beings and abort the natural integration of males and females."

Stressing the unique identity of each individual, Shahin added: "I will not say that when human cloning happens, it will be doomsday but it will be the beginning of the decline of human life. The normal way of living will no longer exist and new modes of life will appear whose grave consequences are known only to God."

Youssef El-Badri, a Muslim preacher, said cloning humans "is not acceptable religiously, ethically and legally... What is happening now in the field of genetic engineering is the work of Satan. Cloning humans will cause chaos and all kinds of crimes will be committed and nobody will know who is responsible."

Fahmi Howeidy, a writer on Islamic affairs, was more cautious. "It is true that religion talks of the normal way of reproduction, and yet religion did not say that other forms are sinful. We should not pass hasty judgement on the matter. We have to gauge the benefits to mankind first. If it is to the benefit of mankind, then religion is not against it."

Howeidy added: "What is controversial here has to do with ethics, not religion. There have to be guarantees and a measure of control since without them, this breakthrough could turn into a nightmare."

Father Yohanna Kolta of the Coptic Catholic Church said the breakthrough "should be respected as a scientific achievement" but quickly added that "there are ethical principles that should not be overstepped. The church rejects science that is divorced from ethics and it refuses to have human beings treated like guinea pigs."

Declaring that the cloning of humans is against all religions, Kolta said: "It would be a disaster and a nightmare for which mankind would pay a dear price."

Dr Mustafa El-Awadi, a professor of molecular genetics, said "it is hard to control people. If the cloning of humans can be done, it will be done. But it should not be done or chaos will prevail."

Dr Said Thabet, a gynaecologist, said that this would be "tampering with the human species. It cannot be accepted by any means, especially in Egypt, where religious principles govern our behaviour."

Dr Mohamed Abul-Ghar, a professor of gynaecology at Cairo University, said the cloning of humans in Egypt is out of the question because it is against religion. However, he predicted that the next step in the West "will be that individuals will clone themselves to have spare parts [of body organs] in store." Forecasting what might turn indeed into a nightmare, Abul-Ghar said that "humans may be able to freeze their duplicates and then take from them any part of the body which they need to replace."

In animals, however, the breakthrough has its advantages, Abul-Ghar said. "It could lead to a myriad of new ways to help humans. Herds of transgenic animals could be raised for proteins, blood and organs," he explained.

The furore is not confined to Egypt. President Clinton has ordered a commission to investigate the Edinburgh discovery, pronouncing himself "deeply troubled." Clinton said the cloning of Dolly raised "serious ethical questions, particularly with respect to the possible use of this technology to clone human embryos. He told a panel of bioethics experts to report back to him in 90 days on the ethical and legal implications of the Edinburgh work.

Clinton also said that no government funds would be made available for research on human cloning and urged scientists to impose a voluntary moratorium on work in the field.

The British government is cutting all funding to the research project that produced the first cloned mammal. The Ministry of Agriculture said the institute had been informed that its 252,000 pound grant from the ministry will be halved in April and cut entirely by April 1998.

Pope John Paul, in an apparent reference to the debate on cloning, spoke out on Sunday against all those who abused human dignity with "dangerous experiments."

As the controversy continued, the *Washington Post* reported that scientists from the state of Oregon used a similar technique to produce monkeys from cloned embryos, the first time a species so closely related to humans has been cloned. The *Post* cited experts as saying the Oregon success adds to a growing body of evidence that there are no insurmountable biological barriers to creating multiple copies of human beings.

# 'No peace without Jerusalem'

Yasser Arafat has vowed that the Palestinians would not watch with folded arms while Israel builds homes for Jews in East Jerusalem. **Khaled Dawoud** reports



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat visited Cairo on Saturday for consultations with President Hosni Mubarak about Israel's plan to build a Jewish quarter in East Jerusalem, which the Palestinians claim as their future capital.

Later, at an emergency session of the Arab League council, Arafat threatened to announce the immediate establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Speaking informally, Arafat explained the scope of the Israeli settlement plan to the Arab delegates, insisting that its actual goal was to encircle East Jerusalem and isolate it from the rest of the West Bank. In this way, he said, Israel would abort the Palestinians' hope to make East Jerusalem the capital of their future state.

East Jerusalem was part of the territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 war along with the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Syria's Golan Heights and Egypt's Sinai desert. Citing the UN Security Council's resolutions 242 of 1967 and 338 of 1973, which call for Israel's withdrawal from occupied Arab territory, Arafat said the evacuation should include East Jerusalem.

The Palestinian leader, who spoke before his departure to the United States on Sunday for meetings with President Bill Clinton and top administration officials, said he would act on all levels — Arab, Islamic, Christian and international — to force Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to reverse his decision.

"We are not going to stand helplessly in the face of the Israeli plan," Arafat said. He threatened to bit back by immediately announcing the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

According to the 1993 Oslo agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, interim self-rule should continue in Gaza and the West Bank for five years, by which time a final settlement should have been reached by the two sides. This final settlement is conceived by the Palestinians as the establishment of an independent state, a proposition which Netanyahu has rejected already. Announcing the Palestinian state before the end of the five-year period in 1998, and given Israeli objections, would definitely add to the complexity of an already volatile situation.

"According to agreements, we should announce the Palestinian state after five years of negotiations," said Arafat.

"Should we overlook the agreements as Netanyahu does and then see what he might do? We have many weapons: Arab, Islamic, Christian and international. We are not unarmed."

Arafat described the Israeli plan to build 6,500 housing units for some 30,000 Jewish settlers in Jabal Abu Ghoneim, or Har Homa, south of Jerusalem, as a "conspiracy against Islam and Christianity." The nearby city of Bethlehem, where Jesus Christ was born, would be the worst affected because the Jewish settlement would block the path of pilgrims travelling between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, Arafat said.

In his usual dramatic way, Arafat hoisted a picture of an Israeli drawing of Temple Mount which was recently given by Netanyahu, as a present, to an orthodox church bishop in Jerusalem. In the Israeli scheme portrayed in the drawing, the Muslim holy site of the Dome of the Rock is replaced by Solomon's Temple which the Israelis believe existed on the same location centuries ago.

Arafat said the appropriate response to Israel's latest plan to end the Palestinian presence in Jerusalem was a firm and united Arab stand. "The Arab leaders are standing by us, but we need stronger and more active support so that we can tell the Israelis that there will be no peace without Jerusalem, and no peace with settlements," he said.

Arafat said he was keeping all his options open. He would call for Arab and Islamic summits in addition to the effort of Arab countries to gain a resolution from the UN Security Council condemning the Israeli settlement plan. If the United States vetoed the proposed resolution, Arafat said he would turn to the UN General Assembly, where Washington has no veto power.

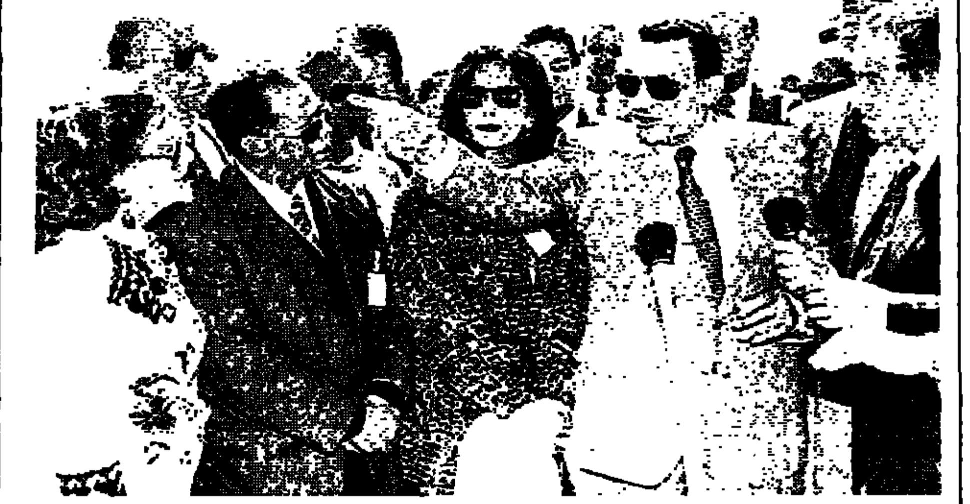
Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdel-Meguid told the emergency session that the Israeli government's plan threatened the future of the entire peace process. He affirmed that resisting the Israeli plan by all means was a "legitimate right supported by international law and agreements."

Abdel-Meguid said that since Israel seized control of the Arab sector of Jerusalem in 1967, it has sought to impose a status quo by confiscating Palestinian land and increasing the number of Jewish settlers. Such measures, he said, violated international agreements and conventions which prevent an occupying power from carrying out any demographic or geographic changes in the territories it occupies.

In a concluding statement, the League council strongly condemned the Israeli plan and urged the international community to put pressure on Netanyahu's government to scrap it. The Israeli move, the statement said, violated the peace agreements between Israel and the Palestinians as well as the principles of the peace process which started with the 1991 Madrid conference. According to these principles, confirmed in letters of guarantees sent by the United States and Russia, the conference co-sponsors, to the Arab participants, Israel should not carry out changes in the occupied Arab territories until a final settlement is reached.

The League council urged Arab countries to remain committed to the resolutions of last June's Arab summit, linking normalisation of relations with Israel to progress in the peace process. The statement also appealed to international donors not to provide Israel with funds that could be used in its settlement activities. A special plea was addressed to the United States, as the most influential broker of the peace process, to put pressure on Netanyahu's government to scrap the settlement plan.





## Toshki update

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak visited the Toshki region of south-western Egypt on Monday to follow up the digging of an irrigation canal that will serve as the backbone of a massive desert reclamation project. Mubarak listened to an update from Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri on the ambitious scheme, begun two months ago, which aims to provide water to allow the population to move out of the over-crowded Nile Valley and establish new agricultural and industrial communities.

According to El-Ganzouri, work has already been completed on about six per cent of the 30-kilometre-long initial phase of the canal, which will take water from Lake Nasser, behind the Aswan High Dam, to the arid plains of the Western Desert. Mubarak praised the efforts of the workers and engineers on site. "Without you," he told them, "we would not have been able to do this."

Responding to the project's critics, Mubarak said comprehensive studies had been carried out before work began, proving that the scheme would generate adequate water resources and that sufficient finance would be available to make the scheme a great success.

"We are using the resources of the country in the interests of the people," Mubarak asserted. "This project will ensure a better future for the coming generations."

To underline the importance of speeding up work, Mubarak said he was considering the appointment of a resident minister to take charge of the project. The tentative deadline for completion of the canal is 2025. By then, the canal should carry more than two billion cubic metres of water to irrigate a million feddans in the Western Desert. The initial phase will be completed in five years.

# Navigating the Nile

Using satellite-guided technology, a survey of the Nile's bed will be carried out to chart a new navigational channel. **Reem Leila** reports

A comprehensive hydrographic survey of the River Nile, enabling a new navigational channel to be charted, is to be launched soon. The survey, which will cover the river between Cairo and Aswan, will take three years to complete. Information from the survey will also be used to decide where to build river services such as docks and harbours.

The survey will be supervised by the Nile Research Institute (NRI), an affiliate of the Ministry of Public Works and Water Resources, but actual implementation will be the responsibility of the General Organisation for River Transport. In a later stage, the channel will be connected to the Mediterranean and Suez Canal to serve as an international maritime route.

The survey, together with the construction of new docks and harbours and the installation of navigational aids, to be completed in four more years, will cost LE20 million.

According to Mohamed Rafiq Abdel-Bari, the NRI's director, the project will be financed locally. "This means that the Ministry of Planning and all the governorates overlooking respective sections of the river will have to cooperate" in raising the necessary money, he said.

The survey will be carried out by special boats equipped with a satellite-guided Global Positioning System, which uses radio waves to gauge the characteristics of the river bed, such as depth and width. The information will be fed into computers to be analysed by specialised engineers in order to determine the areas where the river is deepest, and contour maps and navigational charts will be prepared, delineating these areas. By linking them together, the new navigational channel will emerge, and navigational aids such as buoys, guidance signs and lights will be installed along the channel.

The first phase of the project, which will be launched within the next three months, will cover the 220km-long distance between Aswan and Luxor. It will be completed in approximately one year. The survey boats will head north afterwards to scan other sections of the river.

The new navigational channel will later be turned into an international maritime route by connecting it to the Suez Canal, to the north-east, and the Mediterranean, to the north and north-west. According to Ahmed Hassan, head of the General Organisation for River Transport, the Ismailia irrigation canal will be upgraded to serve as a shipping connection between Cairo and Lake Timsah, which is part of the Suez Canal. Another irrigation canal, Al-Nubariya, will also be upgraded to connect the Nile with Alexandria's Al-Dekheila harbour. A second connection to the Mediterranean, and Damietta harbour, will be the Damietta branch of the Nile, and a navigational channel will be charted there for this purpose.

Once all these projects are completed, Hassan said, river transport would account for around 25 per cent of the volume of transport nationwide, resulting in "a tangible drop in transport costs."

"New ships with special drafts are to be built, according the depth of the new navigational channel, to enable them to float easy all along the Nile course" added Hassan.

Precautions will be taken to protect the Nile from the pollution caused by shipping. According to Mohamed Hassan Amer, who heads a project for "developing" the Nile, all ships and docks will be required to filter any polluting liquids that they discharge.

# 'People's diplomacy' on bumpy road

A group of Sudanese political activists visited Cairo in a fresh attempt to improve the strained relations between the two Nile basin countries. **Dina Ezzat** reports

A seven-member Sudanese delegation, consisting of non-governmental figures and one cabinet minister, left Cairo at the end of a week-long visit believing that a reconciliation between the two countries would be achieved, though not in the immediate future. "We are optimistic. We know that things will not improve overnight but we sense a feeling of reconciliation," said the delegation's spokesman, Abdallah Ahmed Abdallah.

In addition to Abdallah, who heads the Association of Egyptian-Sudanese Brotherhood, the delegation included Ahmed Abdel-Rahman, a minister of state for non-governmental organisations and secretary-general of the Council for Egyptian-Sudanese Brotherhood. The group arrived in Cairo about 10 days ago to reciprocate a visit to Khartoum by a group of Egyptian opposition figures, who were also working to improve strained bilateral relations.

"Recently, relations between Egypt and Sudan have deteriorated badly," Abdallah said. "Because this situation brought trade and maritime travel between the two countries to a halt, it has adversely affected the interests of the Egyptian and Sudanese peoples."

The group's schedule in Cairo included meetings with Youssef Wali, deputy prime minister and secretary-general of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), Moufid Shehab, president of Cairo University and chairman of the Shura Council's Foreign Affairs Committee, representatives of opposition parties and intellectuals like Mohamed Hassanein Heikal.

"We had hoped to meet with Foreign Minister Amr Moussa," Abdallah said. "We sent him a letter requesting a meeting but received no reply."

The delegation reported that "everyone we met, whether from inside or outside the government, was very hospitable and supportive of our attempts to try and mend the fences between the two countries."

Abdallah said the delegation found that the "fears and concerns that have been clouding bilateral relations include, among other things, mutual accusations of offering platforms to the opposition." Other disputed issues include Sudan's claim to the border-triangle of Halayeb and its takeover of Egyptian schools in Sudan and the Khartoum branch of Cairo University. "The problems have accumulated to the extent that the two governments have become paralysed and unable to deal with them," Abdallah said.

The traditionally good relations between Cairo and Khartoum began to deteriorate in 1992 and took a sharp turn for the worse in 1995 after an abortive attempt on President Hosni Mubarak's life in Addis Ababa. Egypt blamed Khartoum for the incident and urged the Sudanese government to extradite three suspects to face trial in Ethiopia. But Sudan refused.

According to members of the Sudanese delegation, their government has provided the Egyptian Interior Ministry with a full dossier of information about Egyptians living in Sudan. Abdallah also told a news conference in Cairo that he had been informed by the Sudanese foreign minister that the three men wanted in connection with the attempt on Mubarak's life were no longer in Sudan.

If this is true, Egyptian officials argue, then the Sudanese government must have made it possible for the three suspects to flee the country.

A Foreign Ministry official told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that it was highly unlikely that the Egyptian government would make concessions on this issue. The official, who asked that his name be withheld, said that "unless the Sudanese have something serious to say about this matter, they are not going to get relations between the two countries back to normal."

Members of the Sudanese delegation argued that since security issues are very complicated, then efforts should be made on other fronts to "allow the ice to melt."

"Maybe if the Sudanese government did something about Egyptian property in Khartoum and the Egyptian government did something about resuming river travel, then we could get both governments to meet somewhere in the middle of the road," said Abdel-Rahman.

The Sudanese delegation said they planned to come back to Cairo to resume their mediation effort. They also welcomed visits by Egyptians sharing the same goal.

# Fear of flying

Travel agents fear that the coming shutdown of the Aswan-Abu Simbel road might have an adverse impact on tourism. **Rehab Saad** looks into the issue

The closure of the 260km road between Aswan and Abu Simbel for much-needed repairs has been delayed until May, following complaints by tourist companies.

The six-month closure, which only affects tourist buses, was originally scheduled to begin in February. It was postponed until March and then May after tourism companies complained that March is part of their peak season.

But travel agencies are still far from satisfied. Although they admit that May is off-peak they believe that closing the road, which is used by an estimated half a million tourists a year, will have a disastrous effect on tourism.

"For us, this is a disaster," said Amani El-Torgoman of Travco Tours. "Abu Simbel is one of the important tourist attractions. The shutdown will kill Abu Simbel as well as tourist cruises in Lake Nasser. Our company alone sends six busloads of tourists every week to Abu Simbel. Now we are going to lose all that."

Abu Bakr El-Shorbagi of 3A Tours agrees that the road needs repairs but points out that the air fare is much more expensive than a bus ticket, which is bound to have a negative impact on tourism. "The flight costs the tourist $142 whereas the bus trip ranges between $40 and $50. The majority of tourists prefer the bus, if only because of the low price. Not all tourists will be able to afford the flight for the excursion. I also do not believe that EgyptAir will be able to transport large numbers of tourists to Abu Simbel."

Mohamed Idris of Seti I company added: "EgyptAir has a monopoly on the whole business because private carriers have shut down. Its prices are high and the service on board is not that great."

The Abu Simbel excursion is not always included in tourist itineraries but is marketed as an optional extra which about 90 per cent of the tourists who go to Upper Egypt take.

"We have about 500 tourists a week who travel to Aswan," said Mohamed Salloume of Memnon tours. "Most of them go to Abu Simbel because it's not expensive. Now many of them will be cancelling that trip."

Nora Ali of South Sinai Travel also believes that the air fare will reduce the number of tourists visiting Abu Simbel. "Swiss operators have already cancelled the trip to Abu Simbel," she said.

But for Fouad Abdel-Aziz, head of the Roads Authority at the Ministry of Transport, the fact remains that the road needs to be repaired or it could endanger the tourists' safety. "When an accident happens on this road, it gives Egypt a bad name which has worse consequences than the shutdown," he said.

The road will not only be repaired but also will be widened to accommodate large buses at a cost of LE45 million, he said. The decision to close the road was taken after lengthy discussions and meetings between the ministers of tourism and transport who agreed it was necessary.

Abdel-Aziz stressed that the road would only be partially closed. "It will be shut to tourist buses but will remain open to other vehicles, especially those transporting material to the [desert reclamation] Toshki project," he said. The reason tourist buses were being targeted, he explained, was that their drivers often exceeded the 60km/h speed limit, which would endanger tourists' safety when the road was being repaired.

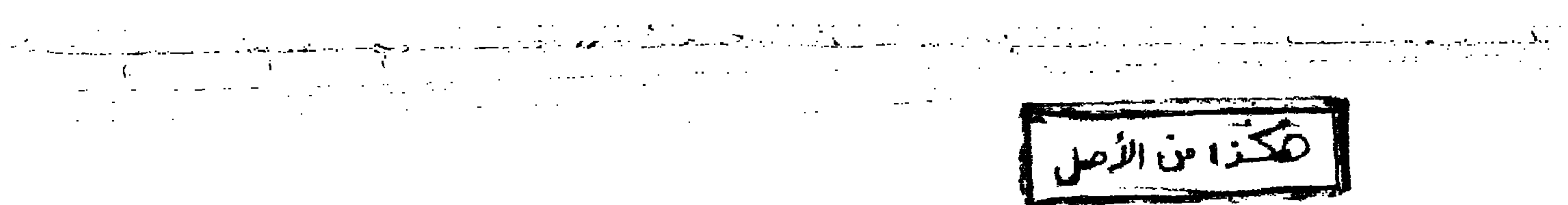
Tourism companies should not panic because two public contracting companies, rather than just one, had been hired to do the job and should complete it within six months, he said. EgyptAir has decided to slash its fare from $142 to $80, so tourism would not suffer, he maintained.

Travco's El-Torgoman suggested that one lane of the road should be shut while the other remained open to traffic moving in both directions. "There is no country in the world where an important road like this is completely closed to tourist buses. Tourism brings in Egypt's second largest income after oil exports. It is a shame to deprive us of that income after the slump of the previous years."









# Copenhagen controversy simmers on

Although no longer front-page news, the Copenhagen Declaration continues to be the subject of controversy. **Dina Ezzat** reports

A seminar organised by the Cairo Centre for Human Rights Studies on the management of dialogue in the Arab world quickly turned into a confrontation between the advocates and opponents of the Copenhagen Declaration.

A clash was more or less inevitable because the seminar brought together two of the Declaration's leading opponents — Mohamed Sid-Ahmed, a leftist, and Adel Hussein, an Islamist — with Abdel-Moneim Said, a champion and a signatory of the document. This was the first such confrontation since the Declaration was issued at the end of January.

The Declaration was the product of a series of meetings between a group of Arab and Israeli intellectuals, which became known as the Louisiana Initiative. It urges a dialogue between intellectuals on both sides with the declared purpose of lobbying the peace camp in Israel to give a push to the peace effort.

Although speakers at the Cairo seminar chose their words with care, the tone was often confrontational. Opponents of the Declaration argued that its Arab signatories had deprived the Arab side of its last bargaining chip by allowing the Israelis to drive a wedge into the united Arab front of opposition to normalisation with Israel. Meanwhile, the Declaration's advocates accused their critics of being unrealistic about the extent of the Arabs' political power. They argued that those who sought to prolong the Arab-Israeli conflict did so only to breathe new life into Islamist and nationalist movements which have so far done their countries more harm than good.

In a 20-minute opening address, Abdel-Moneim Said, director of the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, argued that Arab land could only be regained through dialogue with the Israelis. Dialogue, he said, had "succeeded in achieving what other approaches failed to do, namely regaining Sinai, a part of the Golan Heights and Jordanian territory, as well as 440 square kilometres of Palestinian soil."

Said rejected what have been termed the "ten sins of the Copenhagen Declaration." These include a lack of adequate inter-Arab dialogue preceding the signing of the document, the absence of commitment to the widely accepted foundations of Arab rights, and the questionable credentials of those who signed the Declaration to speak on behalf of their peoples.

Mohamed Sid-Ahmed and Adel Hussein hit back by arguing that the Declaration was a "deviation from the right track." Both said the document had caused serious damage because it allowed the Israelis to sideline the Syrians and to promote the idea that the Arabs must make further concessions. "The absence of the Syrians and the presence of Israeli intelligence [agents] should have been taken into account by those who went to Copenhagen," said Hussein.

Sid-Ahmed, angry that Arab demands were watered down in the document, questioned the qualifications of the Copenhagen delegates. "It was never the role of intellectuals to negotiate," he said. In fact, argued Sid-Ahmed, "The idea of the Declaration was passed from the state to the intellectuals and not the other way round."

As to the future of the Declaration, some believe it could be used to persuade Netanyahu to be more conciliatory in his current dealings with Palestinian negotiators, and possibly with Syrian negotiators in the future. Others believe the document should be ignored altogether.

"It is unlikely that the protagonists of Copenhagen will abandon their project," said the seminar's moderator, political analyst Mohamed El-Sayed Said. "They seem very much convinced that they are doing the right thing."

Last week, political analyst Lutfi El-Kholi, one of the Declaration's signatories, resigned his membership of the Tagammu Party after he was summoned for questioning by the party's leadership. The Afro-Asian Writers Union also decided to expel El-Kholi from its secretary-general post for his role in the Copenhagen talks.

In addition, an 'anti-Copenhagen Declaration' has been signed by over 300 Egyptian, Palestinian, Jordanian, Lebanese and Syrian intellectuals and political activists. The "Declaration of Arab Intellectuals" categorically rejected the Copenhagen Declaration and any subsequent action that might be taken as a result of it.

The "Arab intellectuals" criticised the Copenhagen signatories for speaking on behalf of the Arabs without authorisation to do so, and for agreeing to a document that "has no reference to the Palestinians' right of return [to their homeland] or any mention of the aggression of the Zionist state or the non-stop flow of Jewish immigrants to Palestine."

The intellectuals' declaration called on all intellectuals, writers, artists, and all unions and associations in the Arab world, to "declare their unequivocal stance on the matter, and thus deny a limited number of people the opportunity to claim the right to represent the will of the people".



photo: Sherif Sonbol

**SUDDEN RAIN: Winter this year has been particularly mild and almost dry in Cairo. Last Saturday was warm enough for many people to assume that winter was over. But not quite. On Sunday afternoon temperatures dropped sharply and dark clouds appeared. And by 5.30pm, the skies had opened in a heavy downpour which flooded the streets in a matter of minutes, bringing traffic to a near standstill, as buses, cars and microbuses tried to make their way through the water.**

**Nearly an hour later, central Cairo seemed deserted. Puddles of muddy water filled the streets, and the downpour continued sporadically throughout the night.**

**In some provincial areas, the rainfall continued for six hours without letup. Three people were killed in rain-related accidents. One of them was electrocuted by a short circuit, while two others died in a collision between two taxis in the Nile Delta town of Kafr Al-Dawwar. Nine others were injured in the same road accident.**

**Sherif Hammad of the National Weather Forecast Service, which failed to predict the downpour, was quoted as saying that satellite pictures contained no indication that the rainfall was imminent. The weather change had been too sudden,**

# Shi'ite preacher regains freedom

A Muslim preacher accused of propagating the Shi'ite faith was released last week after spending six months in jail. **Amira Howeidy** investigates how Sheikh Hassan Shehata regained his freedom

Sheikh Hassan Shehata, accused of propagating the Shi'ite faith at a mosque near Cairo University, was released by security authorities last week after six months in solitary confinement. Although the reasons for his release remain unclear, reports in the Arabic-language press suggested that he was freed after declaring his "repentance".

Shehata's release coincided with the visit to Cairo by Imam Mohamed Mahdi Shamseddin, head of the Lebanese Shi'ite Council, raising questions as to whether the two events were related.

Shamseddin told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that he had followed the controversy over the Shi'ite arrests and had "intervened to clarify what was mistakenly interpreted as a hostile official stance against the Shi'ites." He had not, however, intervened "in the area concerned with security."

However, the spiritual leader of the Lebanese Shi'ites did not conceal his displeasure at the Egyptian media's coverage of the case. "Some of the published material was inaccurate and contained lies and allegations concerning Shi'ite thought, although there is nothing that can really be called Shi'ite thought, as such," Shamseddin said. "The whole affair must have been the result of a misunderstanding, either by the media or the security forces. But it's all over now."

Shehata was arrested a few weeks before 55 other Shi'ites were rounded up last October. An Interior Ministry statement accused them of acting to "propagate the ideology of the Iranian Revolution." According to the statement, literature and tapes "which propagate Shi'ite thought and distort the fundamentals of the Islamic religion" were found in their possession.

Those arrested were said to have established several centres in five governorates and to have planned to set up a supreme council to lead the Shi'ite movement in this country. With funding from local and foreign sources amounting to LE100,000, the group's leaders were said to have visited Iran and established contact with leading Iranian and Arab Shi'ite figures.

Two months before the arrests were made, presidential adviser Osama El-Baz stated that Egypt possessed strong evidence that Iran had connections with local "terrorists" and that this evidence would be made public when the time was right.

In addition to the charge of propagating the Shi'ite faith, Shehata was also accused of holding Islam in contempt. Shi'ites believe that Ali Ibn Abi-Taleb, the Prophet Mohamed's cousin, should have been the first Caliph following the Prophet's death. They believe that his prerogative was unjustly usurped by the three Caliphs who came before him — Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq, Omar Ibn Al-Khattab and Osman Ibn Affan.

Hani Burham, an officer with the state security prosecution, said that it was not the policy to disclose reasons why an arrested person was released "in instances where the case has not been closed or while the investigation is continuing." The theory that Shehata was released because he had repented "is not very accurate," Burham said. He also denied any connection between Shamseddin's visit and Shehata's release.

A legal source close to the case, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told the *Weekly* that Shehata had to be freed because he had spent six months in custody — the longest period permitted by law. The 55 other Shi'ites had been released earlier.

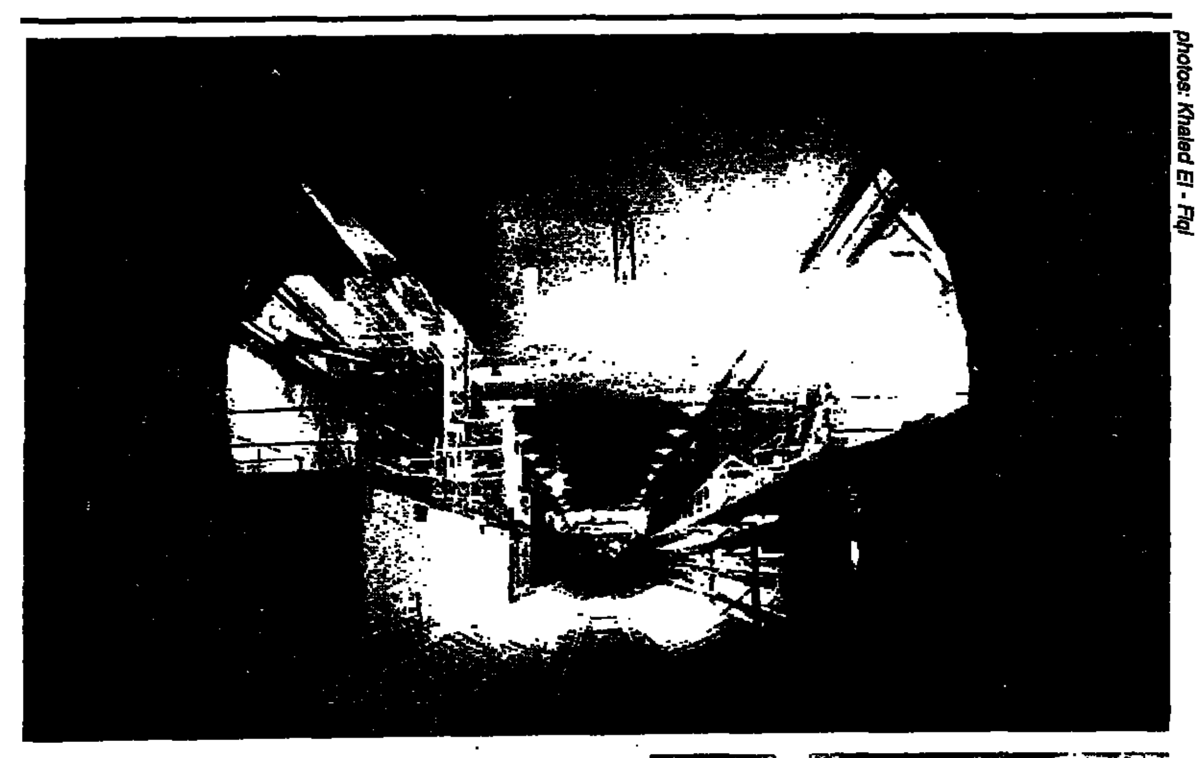
The source confirmed reports that Shehata had declared his "repentance". "He spent six months in solitary confinement. He is diabetic and could not endure his situation much longer. This is why he offered to declare his repentance." This, the source said, was a reversal of his earlier position. Before his arrest, police had confiscated a tape of Shehata cursing the companions of the Prophet Mohamed, the source said.

According to Shehata's defence attorney, Moukhtar Nouh, the charge of propagating the Shi'ite faith is not punishable under Egyptian law. And holding Islam in contempt, Nouh said, is a loose phrase which has also been invoked against the so-called devil worshippers, who, he pointed out, were also eventually released.

The idea that someone could be released on the grounds that he has repented also has no basis in la /, Nouh said. "Someone can only declare repentance when he has been proved guilty," he said. "And even if he repents, it would not erase the crime he has committed." But, Nouh added, there is such a thing as "political repentance."

The legal source said that following his release, Shehata had decided to stop preaching. Shehata could not be reached for comment, but a recorded message on his answering machine shed light on his new position. The old message, which simply stated that he was not at home, has been replaced with a long statement praising the Prophet Mohamed and his companions.

But as far as the state security police are concerned, the case is not closed. "Shehata has been released but not acquitted. The case is not over yet," said Burham.



photos: Khaled El-Fiqi

# Onward on the underground

CONSTRUCTION work on the second phase of Cairo's second underground metro line, connecting Ramses, Ataba and Tahrir squares, has been completed and the line is due to open in October, reports **Mona El-Nahhas**.

Workers are adding the final touches to the 11km-long tunnel, which will serve some of Cairo's most densely-populated districts.

The first phase, which has been running since last October, connects Shubra El-Kheima, an industrial suburb north of Cairo, with Ramses Square. "Construction work on the tunnel [of the second phase] and its four stations has been completed," said El-Husseini Abdel-Salam, head of the National Authority for Tunnels. "The railway lines have been installed as well as the power network that will feed the trains and stations with electricity. Now workers are installing additional equipment, which includes escalators, elevators, air conditioners and lighting systems." This will be completed in June and the line will operate experimentally until official inauguration in October.

At Ataba, one of the major stations serving the second phase of the underground, workers were busy painting the walls and putting up ceramic tiles. The station has six gates and 12 escalators.

In a third phase, on which work is continuing simultaneously, the line will cross the River Nile and run through Dokki and Giza until it reaches Cairo University. It is scheduled for completion by the end of 1999.

At present, the 800-ton German-made digging machine Nefertiti is busy at El-Bohouth station near El-Dokki Square on the tunnel's construction. The machine breaks up the soil by using a chemical solution. After digging the body of the tunnel, the machine covers it with concrete rings, each 1.5m long. "Nearly 70 per cent of the rings have been installed," said Youssri Khattab, the authority's deputy chairman. Inside the tunnel, a small trolley moves back and forth, carrying the heavy concrete pieces. Waste from the digging passes through a wide pipe into large sieves which separate the chemical solution for recycling.

The machine will reach the next station, El-Dokki, within the next few days, said Khattab. Then, it will be time for the crucial part, the unprecedented digging below the Nile's bed. "This step will require a thorough study of the bottom of the Nile to decide the safest course," he said.

Experts are already working on a study of a third metro line to connect Imbaba, northwest of Cairo, and El-Darrassa on the eastern fringes of the capital, Khattab added.

The first line, connecting Helwan in the south with El-Marg in the north, is mostly above ground but has an underground 4.5km-long stretch between Sayeda Zeinab and Ramses Square.

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**

# Washington hums and haws

**Despite the Clinton administration's warm welcome of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on his first official visit to the nation's capital, the US stand on Israeli settlement expansion remains weak. Lamis Andoni reports from Washington**



US President Bill Clinton shakes hands with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat before a meeting in the Oval office *(photo: Reuters)*

He received a warm reception at the White House; he spoke to the attentive ears of American decision-makers; but Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat could not secure an American commitment to prevent Israel from continuing its settlement expansion in the West Bank.

Furthermore, the Palestinian leader left without knowing if the US will allow the United Nations Security Council to pass a resolution condemning Israel's plan to build housing units on the Palestinian Jebel Abu Ghneim on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

There are indications, however, that the US may push Israel to further redeploy from rural West Bank areas to avert a collapse of the peace process. Palestinian officials accompanying Arafat told *Al-Ahram Weekly*, that they told the administration that "a sizable" Israeli pull-out in the first phase of further redeployment is necessary to restore Palestinian confidence in the peace process.

The officials said that Washington understood the seriousness of the situation.

"The Americans understand the dangerous legal and de facto repercussions of the Israeli plans on the peace process," senior PLO official Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), told the *Weekly*.

In public statements, as well as behind closed doors, senior American officials are alarmed by Israel's plans to expand settlements. But, as they told Arafat, there will be a limit to what the administration will actually do.

"They (the Americans) told us that they will talk to the Israelis, but they also said they were not sure that they would succeed in convincing Israel to reconsider its step," Abu Mazen said.

Both the warm reception accorded Arafat and Washington's reluctance to act beyond "a mild criticism" of Israel are two manifestations that illustrate the US position. On one hand, the US views Arafat, or more specifically Israeli-Palestinian cooperation, to be crucial to the continuity of the Middle East peace process. In that respect, it was significant that on the first day of Arafat's visit, the first meeting on the agenda was an early morning session between FBI chief, Louis Freeh, and Palestinian chief of the Preventive Security, Jbril Rajoub. On the other hand, the US will not take any steps that might weaken the Israeli government's standing in the region or domestically.

To reconcile the two divergent aspects of the American position, Washington is expected to take significant steps to ensure that the current crisis over the Jebel Abu Ghneim settlements will not disrupt the peace process.

The Americans' primary concern is that Israel's construction of the housing units will spark violent popular Palestinian protests, placing the whole peace process on the brink of collapse — where it was following Israel's decision to open the controversial tunnel in Jerusalem last September.

According to US analysts, the administration's main priority is to prevent the crisis from triggering "violence". "We told them it would be difficult to restrain people's reaction if the Israelis went ahead with their plans," Abu Mazen remarked without disclosing if the US has asked the Palestinians for commitments to prevent violence.

He also would not say if the Palestinian Authority had indicated its own policy for managing the evolving crisis, but he insisted that they had made it clear to American officials that Israel should honour its commitments to begin final redeployment without further procrastination. The first phase of the final redeployment is scheduled to take place by the end of the first week of March, but Israel has indicated that there will be delays.

American officials said the US would continue its quiet diplomacy with Israel to restore the momentum that was generated by the signing of the Hebron agreement on 15 January. Analysts close to the administration believe that Washington will act more assertively only if violence erupts or it sees that Palestinian anger over the settlements is undermining normalisation between Israel and the Arab World.

In fact, these are exactly what the Palestinian leadership believes to be its only bargaining card in an otherwise weak position. "The Arab countries have either frozen or refused to even start normalisation with Israel while Palestinians are still dissatisfied," said one official accompanying Arafat.

To placate Palestinian anger, however, the administration showed exceptional warmth to Arafat who was in Washington for the first time on an official visit and not in the context of a ceremony or summit. The US also took an important step toward appeasing the Palestinian leadership by initiating the formation of a joint American-Palestinian committee headed by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Arafat. The committee, which is to follow up on Palestinian-American ties, will be run by Palestinian Minister of Planning Nabil Shaath and Aaron Miller, the experienced deputy of special Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross.

Palestinians welcomed this opening of a steady channel to the American administration, and saw it as an important step in the elevation of American-Palestinian relations. For Palestinian officials, it meant that the US, for the first time, was dealing with the Palestinian Authority on an equal level.

However, in practice, they conceded, neither the committee nor the reception accorded Arafat at the White House would change the situation on the ground unless Washington was ready to take action with regard to Israel.

# Algerian government ready for poll

**By forming the "presidential" party, the Algerian regime is geared for the second multilateral parliamentary elections, reports Amira Howeidy**

Only a few days after the appointed National Transitional Council (NTC) approved two laws on the electoral system and the establishment of political parties, the council's Speaker Abdel-Haq Ben Saleh announced the establishment of the National Democratic Tagammu (NDT) led by himself.

The party, the first to be formed after the NTC passed the newly modified electoral law, was immediately described as the presidential party. It will guarantee, together with the former ruling National Liberation Front (FLN), a major pro-government victory in the expected upcoming parliamentary elections.

Although President Liamine Zeroual did not officially set the date for the elections, his 'suggestion' of holding them on 29 May seems to be taken seriously by his government. Algeria's political parties, on the other hand, have not clearly defined their position from the expected poll which is likely to witness less partisan competition and more violence.

The new political parties law enacted under amendments of the Algerian constitution passed last December, bans the formation of political parties on the basis of religious, linguistic, ethnic or professional factors. It also prohibits the exploitation of Algeria's Arab, Islamic or Amazeghan (Berber) identity in partisan propaganda.

The Algerian government announced earlier last month that political parties have 60 days to re-register in accordance with the stipulations of the new law or else they will lose their legal status.

The 1989 Constitution established a multi-party political system for the first time in Algeria and permitted the formation of political parties within minimal requirements. Any 15 adult individuals agreeing on a political agenda were allowed to register as a party. This situation resulted in the creation of approximately 69 parties, most of which are referred to as politically insignificant.

The new law on the other hand, stipulates that any political party has to provide proof that it has supporters in at least 25 out of Algeria's 44 governorates. The number of supporters in each governorate should not be less than 100.

Since this law is expected to exclude the marginal parties, the political arena will be left with approximately 9 major political parties, most of which will have to change their current platforms. Reactions from most opposition leaders towards the compulsory changes was sharply critical , but was toned down lately as some announced their determination to maintain the spirit of their platforms by playing with words.

For example, the Islamic-oriented Hamas which stands for the Movement for Islamic Society will replace the adjective 'Islamic' with a similar word that will maintain the same initials so that the party's name will not have to be changed, said an official Hamas spokesman. Other tolerated Islamic oriented parties such as El-Nahda and the Al-Tajdid will follow Hamas' path "to keep the Islamic principles and spirit" in their platforms, El-Nahda's media representative said.

Observers argue that, with this new law, President Zeroual hopes to avert all attempts of using Islamic references in partisan propaganda to avoid repeating the 1991 elections scenario. The banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) would have won the elections then had not the army cancelled them and enforced martial law.

Since 1991, however, the political map has changed to place the secular Front for Socialist Forces (FFS) and Hamas as major competitors for the government. Led by the popular Hussein Ayat Ahmed, the FFS enjoys significant support in the majority of the Qabael (Berber) areas and also stands as the regimes strongest and most consistent opposition. The FFS and Berber Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), which enjoys much less popularity, will have to change their founding platforms, clearing them of statements which call for the enhancement of Berber culture and language.

To Ayat-Ahmed, the changes only reflect the "military-dominated empty political circle" and show that by enforcing such laws, the government "has chosen a destructive policy which will result in repressing the entire civil society."

Some argue that regardless of the government's intentions, a positive change in the electoral law should be tolerated. The previous electoral law, they say, magnified the FIS's popular support and did not accurately reflect its real power.

According to Mohiedeen Amimmour, member of the FLN's central committee, the 1989 electoral law was based on the 'majority' and not 'proportional' system of representation. The majority system meant, he pointed out, that the FIS, by receiving 3,200,000 votes in the first round, secured 188 seats in parliament. On the other hand, the FLN which received half that number of votes (1,600,00) could not get more than 18 seats in parliament. "This meant that the number of parliamentary seats won at that time, based on the majority of each party, did not clearly reflect their real power" he said.

But the new proportional electoral law and political parties law are not the only two measures secured by Zeroual's regime to guarantee "safe" elections.

The establishment of the National Democratic Tagammu Party — led by the powerful NTC speaker Ben-Saleh — is already threatening the other political parties which fear it will be supported by the junta. Most observers expect the newly born party to win a sweeping victory in the coming elections. According to a source in Hamas, the authorities do not have faith in the current parties and have, therefore, decided to form a party from their "own womb". While Ayat-Ahmed described Ben-Saleh's party as the "party of new dictatorship", former parliament Speaker Abdel-Aziz Belkhadem argued that the goal of the new party is to "shape the parliamentary map even before the elections."

Algerian officials deny the regime's affiliation to the new party, maintaining that the idea behind its formation is two years old but was deferred because of the state of insurgency.

Most observer, however, expect significant changes in the stances of Algeria's political parties on the elections. None has clearly announced whether they will contest the polls but some reports suggest the possibility of surprise coalitions between the four main political forces on the Algerian scene. The strongest, some predict ,will be the Islamic bloc formed of Hamas, El-Nahda and Al-Tajdid, followed by the secular bloc of the FFS, and the national bloc of the FLN and former President Ben Bella's Movement for the Democracy of Algeria (MDA).

# New hope for Libya

**In a show of solidarity with Libya, African foreign ministers held their first meeting ever in the capital Tripoli to discuss several volatile regional issues, reports Khaled Dawoud**

Foreign ministers of the 52-member Organisation of African Unity (OAU) defied US attempts to tighten its hold on Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi for his alleged involvement in "supporting terrorism", and held their annual meeting last week in the capital Tripoli.

The three-day meeting ended with a strong statement condemning the continuation of the United Nations' Security Council air and arms embargo imposed on Libya in April 1992. The Security Council, mainly under pressure by the United States, imposed these sanctions to force Gaddafi to hand over for trial in either the US or Britain two Libyans suspected of bombing a Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1989, killing 271 people.

Gaddafi offered to have the two Libyans tried in any country other than the US or Britain, because, he asserted, a trial in the two Western countries would be political rather than criminal. He also proposed setting up a special tribunal for the two suspects in the Hague by the International Court of Justice.

The administrations, however, of both former US President George Bush and President Bill Clinton have firmly rejected the Libyan proposals, and recent reports in American media indicated that the tendency in the White House was to further tighten the siege on Gaddafi's regime.

OAU ministers, however, sent a different message to Washington. Nearly 40 African ministers crossed the desert border between Tunisia and Libya using cars to reach Tripoli after flying into Tunis. Others, like Egypt's Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, crossed the Egyptian-Libyan border at Salloum and then flew to Tripoli, as the Security Council sanctions do not include a ban on Libyan domestic flights.

OAU Secretary-General Salem Ahmed Salem confirmed that holding the meeting in Tripoli was an act of solidarity with the Libyan people, "against the unfair and unjustified sanctions." He said that according to the OAU charter, the annual foreign ministers meeting should be held at the organisation's headquarters in Ethiopia, but an exception was made in this case to send a clear message' to the US reiterating their opposition to its policy toward Libya.

Gaddafi, as expected, took the opportunity to lecture African leaders on his revolutionary views and theories. He said the US should stay out of Africa's problems and urged the ministers to solve their countries' problems unilaterally.

"We must close the door — forever — in the face of intervention by Americans and others in Africa. We are neither children nor incapable people that America needs to come across the ocean to solve our problems," he told the African ministers at a dinner he hosted.

Gaddafi said that the convening of the OAU meeting in Libya was a rejection of the "unfair siege" on his country. He accused the US of being the real aggressor in Africa, the Arab countries and the Third World in general. "We are forced to stand against America because it is the one that aggresses, interferes and wants to trample us."

Despite this strong show of solidarity, none of the African countries announced, contrary to Gaddafi's wishes, a one-sided lifting of the sanctions. The Libyan leader has repeatedly called upon Arab and African countries to ignore the US sanctions and order their national air carriers to fly directly into Tripoli. Gaddafi himself defied the air embargo last June and flew directly to Cairo to attend the first Arab summit in six years. Several other attempts to fly Libyan airplanes to nearby African countries were also reported, and although condemned by the Security Council, no action was taken against Tripoli.

The OAU ministers, despite the dominating sanction issue, also discussed the volatile situations in other African countries, mainly Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire. They agreed to meet again in Togo on 26 March to discuss the situation in the Great Lakes Area more comprehensively.

Sudan, meanwhile, levelled sharp accusations at Ethiopia and Eritrea in the last day of meetings, accusing its neighbours of supporting opposition groups seeking to overthrow the existing government. Sudanese Foreign Minister Ali Othman Taha, however, found few supporters among participants in the meeting. The foreign ministers of Ethiopia and Eritrea vehemently denied taking any part in the Sudanese opposition's recent military offensive against government troops near the Ethiopian border. They insisted that the ongoing fight between the government and opposition in Sudan was a result of the aggressive policies of President Omar Bahsir and his ally Hassan Al-Turabi. Sudan's involvement in the failed assassination attempt against President Hosni Mubarak in June 1995, while he was in Addis Ababa to attend the OAU summit, said Ethiopia's foreign minister, was the most clear evidence of Sudan's involvement in supporting terrorist groups and interfering with its neighbour's internal affairs.

As one of the items on the agenda was the strengthening of Arab-African relations, the OAU meeting's final statement emphasised its strong support of Arab countries in their negotiations with Israel. They also expressed their concern over the deterioration of the peace process since the assent of Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to power in June, and their firm backing of the Palestinian people and their right to establish an independent state.

Several African countries, including those who severed ties with Israel following the 1967 war, resumed their relations with Tel Aviv after the opening of the Arab-Israeli peace conference in Madrid in 1991, and the signing of peace agreements between Israel, Egypt, the Palestinians and Jordan. Arab countries hope these relations will slow down because of obstacles effecting the peace process. They hope this will increase international pressure on Netanyahu's government to change its intransigent stands and respect the agreements already signed between the two sides.

# What makes Jordan tick

**Is a military pact between Jordan and Israel in the making? Galal Nassar analyses Jordan's latest political moves and its role in the region**

From time to time, Jordan comes up with new political moves that bewilder observers of the political scene in the region. Only a few days after King Hussein invited Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to Amman to discuss the lifting of bilateral trade barriers, the future of Jerusalem, water-sharing and Israeli settlements, he met with friends of the Israeli Meretz Party in the United States. On that occasion, he attacked Netanyahu's policies and described the Israeli prime minister as amateurish and lacking in wisdom.

The attack coincided with a report released by the Israeli Embassy in Amman which set the volume of trade exchange between Israel and Jordan in the vicinity of $18 million over a six-month period last year. The report, of which AFP secured a copy, shows that from the time the trade agreement between the two countries was concluded on 24 June and until the end of December 1996, Jordan has exported some $5,941,750 worth of goods to Israel. Israel's exports to Jordan, on the other hand, were estimated by the report at $11,808,000, consisting of agricultural machinery, tools and food stuffs. Jordan earned some $1,078 million from tourism last year, which the report calls the dividends of peace. An estimated 250,000 Israelis visited Jordan last year, while less than 70,000 Jordanians visited Israel over the same period.

Such contradiction between words and deeds can be explained by the fact that the Jordanian regime finds itself torn between domestic public opinion and US pressure. Domestically, the country is opposed to normalisation with Israel. This opposition escalated to new heights last week, driving 25 members of the 80 member House of Representatives to call on the prime minister to sever relations permanently with Israel in response to its settlement policy. Externally, the country is sensitive to pressure for normalisation applied by the US, knowing that the latter is the best guarantor of Jordan's regime as well as its internal and external stability.

What is difficult to explain though is the statements by Netanyahu to *Jane's*, the British journal specialised in defence matters, that there exists a "realistic" possibility of a mutual defence agreement between Jordan and Israel. Netanyahu explained that Israel has a vital interest in the stability of Jordan, and that such a pact would consolidate stability, but that further negotiations were needed.

Moreover, there have been reports of meetings held by security officials in the two countries to discuss coordination and cooperation between Israeli and Jordanian armed forces. Audi Dayan, the commander of the Israeli central military zone, met in Amman with Major-General Tahsin Sourour, the Jordanian chief of staff also responsible for intelligence. The meeting drew a joint plan of action for the coming year to prevent attempts at infiltration across the Jordanian-Israeli border and to control security on both sides of the line. Further, the Israeli minister of defence, Yitzhak Mordechai, asserted in an interview with the *Jordan Times* that, for Israel, Jordan has become a bridge to other Arab countries, including Syria and Iraq. Mordechai stated that Jordan could play a very effective role in inducing changes in the Middle East. He explained that Israel and Jordan have established relations of mutual trust and understanding and could even establish a hot line for defence matters.

Major-General Abdel-Rahman Roushdy, Egyptian professor of military strategy and national security at the Nasser Military Academy, believes that a defence agreement between Israel and Jordan is an option. He assured *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the idea has been proposed a number of times, but in view of Arab opposition, it was put off as premature. The League of Arab States is still to this day opposed to the normalisation of relations with Israel because a settlement has not been achieved on all tracks yet. In addition, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa's characterisation of Jordanian policy as a "rush" to cooperate with Israel has reverberated within Jordan and the entire Arab world.

Such reactions, however, have not dissuaded Jordan from its intentions to enter into a defence pact with Israel. Jordan is just waiting for the opportune moment, when the peace process on the Israeli-Syrian track will have progressed and settlement with the Palestinians reached its final stage. Once this is achieved, Jordan is likely to be the one to accelerate the conclusion of the defence pact with Israel. Major-General Roushdy notes that two factors drive Jordan to such a pact. One is that a large percentage of the Jordanian population is Palestinian, constituting a potential threat to the Hashemite throne. The other is the continuous pressure exerted by the US for Jordan to consolidate relations with Israel, including intermittent pressure for a bilateral defence agreement within a regional framework.

The idea of a regional security plan was raised by Jordan with US-British support at the end of the arms control meeting held in Doha in 1994. The idea was brought up again by British Foreign Minister Malcolm Rifkind in Abu Dhabi in 1996. The mechanism, named the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in the Middle East by Jordan, would copy its prototype in Europe. The US, however, did not give a label to its own concept of such a mechanism. The US seeks to establish a comprehensive cooperative security system in the region, as well as liaison committees to undertake the settlement of disputes during a transition period; implement arms control measures; perform peace-keeping and military monitoring tasks by joint military forces of the countries in the region; and induce changes in the attitudes of parties to the dispute in the Middle East.

In view of Egypt's consistent rejection of all security plans on the grounds that such systems only serve the interests of their propagators, the US and Britain are agreed that Jordan and Israel would be the tools for the establishment and consolidation of a security system.

Tel Aviv is obviously the gate to Washington and US arsenals, a reality Jordan is well aware of, and whose benefits it has started reaping already. On 26 February, Jordan received from the US a C-130 aircraft for transporting heavy military equipment. The aircraft, which costs one hundred million dollars, is part of the military assistance allocated by the US to Jordan. On that occasion, the US ambassador to Jordan, said that the US wants to enhance the military capability of Jordan and modernise its arsenal. He explained that "there is a deeper understanding on the part of the US of the role of Jordan in the Middle East."

Major-General Mohamed Kheir Ababna, the commander-in-chief of the Jordanian Air Force, stated last week that joint US-Jordanian military exercises would start this month. He admitted to the fact that because the US considers Jordan a principal ally in the region, Jordan is now eligible to obtain sophisticated weapons from the US. He said that during the year 1997, Jordan is expected to receive 16 F-16 advanced combat planes. Jordan has already received 18 UH helicopters, 50 M-60 tanks, 250 M-113 armoured personnel carriers, in addition to light naval ships, light weapons and other military equipment delivered last December.

The enigma of the sudden switch in Jordanian-Iraqi relations may be explained along the same lines. Relations between the two countries have witnessed an overnight metamorphosis, including telephone communications between Saddam Hussein and King Hussein. The new shift can be explained by the fact that Jordan is conforming to the gradual shift in US strategy from one intent on ousting Saddam Hussein to one seeking to contain his regime by means of economic sanctions. Jordan's attitude was encouraged also by the change in the attitudes of the Gulf countries, which no longer seem to mind or voice objections to Jordanian-Iraqi rapprochement, since the ousting of Saddam is no longer an American objective.

Thus it would seem that Jordan is presently intent on advancing its own interests by consistently identifying with the interests of the US, even at the expense of Arab national or security interests. This is manifested in Jordan's excessive rapprochement with Israel and their willingness to endorse the proposed security schemes despite the fact that they serve the interests of the US and its allies in the region. Jordan is going so far on the strength of US promises to support its regime and ensure it a continued and effective role in any dialogue on the Middle East.

# Via Dolorosa

**The construction of the Har Homa settlement represents both a violation of the peace accords and a criminal destruction of a Biblical landscape. Beside imposing a new reality in the Bethlehem and Jerusalem area, which will have devastating consequences on the welfare of Palestinian communities, the construction of Western-style high-rises, hotels and industrial parks on Jebel Abu Ghneim, a forested hill adjacent to the historical Christian site of the Shepherd's Fields, and the spot where St Mary dismounted before giving birth to Jesus, is an outrage that must be opposed world-wide**



## Protest and prayer

**Palestinian reactions to Har Homa oscillates between peaceful protests and threats of a new intifada. But for how long, wonders Graham Usher in Jerusalem**

Last Friday, about 200 Palestinians marched in protest at the Likud government's decision to build a new Jewish settlement, called Har Homa in Hebrew, on Jebel Abu Ghneim, a forested hill-top less than two kilometers north of the city of Bethlehem. At the foot of the hill, a cordon of Israeli soldiers barred access to the site. The Palestinians neither complained nor threw stones. They knelt down and prayed. At an impromptu rally after the stand-off, Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member and Fatah leader, Abbas Zaki, counselled Palestinian youths against clashing with Israeli soldiers. But he also warned that Palestinians "may not be so patient once the bulldozers come."

Initial Palestinian reactions to the decision to go ahead with the building of the Har Homa settlement have been a mix of threat and restraint, the political equivalent of leading people to the foot of the hill only to get them to pray. In the run-up to the decision, PLO leader Faisal Husseini said he could already "smell a new intifada in the air" over Jebel Abu Ghneim, and warned Israel that to build a new settlement there would "destroy the peace process." After the Har Homa settlement was unanimously approved by the Israeli cabinet on 26 February, the Palestinian language cooled a little. "We shall pursue peaceful means of peaceful protest, such as sit-down strikes, to stop the bulldozers," said Husseini the next day.

The protests have followed the same path. One day after the "pray-in", around 1,000 Palestinians and Israeli peace activists marched from the West Bank village of Beit Sahour to the hill-top. On 3 March, Palestinians throughout the occupied territories observed a general strike called for by the PLC. Fatah has called for a mass demonstration at the site after Friday prayers tomorrow. "We expect 10,000 on Friday — 7,000 Palestinians and 3,000 Israelis," said PLC Bethlehem representative, Salah Tamari. But "we do not expect bloodshed," he added.

This steady escalation is in line with Yasser Arafat's directives, say Palestinian sources. But the main order remains one of restraint, and for several reasons.

The first is that Arafat cannot risk another round of popular and military confrontations like those that followed the Western Wall tunnel opening last September, if only because, this time, the Israeli army is fully prepared for them. On 27 February, Israel's Defence Minister, Yitzhak Mordechai, alerted the army "to take all necessary measures" should disturbances break out after the Har Homa decision. These measures include, say Israeli sources, plans to deploy the army backed up by tanks throughout the occupied territories including the Palestinian autonomous areas.

A second reason is that today (Thursday) the Israeli cabinet is due to decide the extent of the army's first West Bank redeployment, as required by the Hebron agreement. There is speculation that Netanyahu may transfer between six and 10 per cent of the West Bank to the Palestinian Authority (PA) as "compensation" for Har Homa. There is also the suspicion the prime minister would freeze the redeployment should there be mass protests in the territories. Either way, Arafat will probably want to know what he is going to get before deciding what he is going to do.

The main reason, however, is that, for now, Arafat's priority is to isolate Netanyahu diplomatically over Har Homa. In the space of five days, the PLO leader met with the European Union, Morocco's King Hassan, King Hussein and President Mubarak — all of whom publicly criticised Likud's settlement policies in East Jerusalem. At an Arab League meeting in Cairo on 1 March, Arafat raised the rhetorical heat a little by threatening unilaterally to "declare a Palestinian state now" in response to Israel's actions in Jerusalem.

The aim of this frenzied diplomacy was to build the maximum international consensus behind the Palestinians during Arafat's meeting with President Clinton and other US officials in Washington this week. The US leader's public line was that while he would have preferred that the "Har Homa decision had not been made", he also made it clear that the US could or would do nothing to prevent Israel from building the settlement. However, according to senior US sources quoted widely in the Israeli and Palestinian press, Clinton also quietly promised Arafat that the US would "exert its full influence" on the Netanyahu government to keep it from building the new settlement "until a final status accord" between Israel and the Palestinians "is worked out". In return, the PA was to comply with the Oslo Accords and Arafat was to prevent "any violent Palestinian response" in the occupied territories that might "endanger the peace process".

Arafat's main leverage with the US will thus be proportionate to the control he exerts over his people. In this, the PLO leader has been helped by his own opposition. On 27 February, 10 Palestinian groups, including the PLO's anti-Oslo Popular and Democratic Fronts (PF/DF) and the Islamist movement Hamas, met in Nablus to convene the Palestinian National Dialogue conference. It was the first time since the Oslo Accords that the PLO and Islamist opposition met publicly with Arafat and the PA. While Arafat was often the target of harsh criticism at the conference, especially over the PA's human rights record, most Palestinian observers viewed the Nablus meeting as a victory for Arafat over the rejectionists. "It not only shows that Arafat's leadership once more commands legitimacy among all strands of the Palestinian national movement, it also means that the opposition, grudgingly, has come to accept the Oslo process," said one Popular Front leader in the Occupied Territories.

It is a message Arafat will want to be heard throughout the region, but especially in Washington. But it is also a gamble. For in mobilising the opposition behind his leadership, Arafat is raising expectations among Palestinians that Har Homa can and should be resisted. Should diplomacy fail to deliver, there will be pressure on Arafat to adopt slightly more militant tactics than praying. This may also be a dividend of the Nablus meeting.

## Netanyahu dodging peace

Faisal Al-Husseini spoke to **Rasha Saad** on the explosive situation in Jerusalem and the West Bank

**Israel has ordered the closure of the offices of four Palestinian organisations in Jerusalem one week after its decision to build Har Homa. Does this act represent a deliberate escalation of tensions?**

Yes, Israel is making the tension escalate in Jerusalem. It is trying by all means to drive the Palestinians to the point of complete despair, turning relations between the Palestinians and Israelis back to the way they were before the conclusion of peace agreements. It is also significant that the Israeli decision to close down the offices of the four Palestinian organisations was issued a day before Netanyahu's visit to Egypt. Is this the gift he is carrying to Egypt? Is he going to Egypt to improve ties or to make things worse?

**What do you think will be the impact of such escalation?**

The continuing Israeli provocation of the Palestinians will surely lead to an explosion. But I do not know when, or what the spark that causes it will be. The 1987 Intifada was ignited by a car crash of an Israeli military vehicle and another carrying Palestinian labourers in which six died.

**Will such acts provoke another Intifada?**

The Palestinian Authority is trying to deal with problems by means of negotiations and international pressure. However, the fact that Israel continuously provokes the Palestinians undermines these attempts and makes the explosion inevitable.

**There have been calls for the Palestinian leadership to take "strong and decisive action" against the Israeli decision to build new settlements. Do you think that halting negotiations, both bilateral and multilateral, is the way out?**

Until now the Palestinians have tried to use negotiations to move the peace process forward and to establish an on-going dialogue with Israel and convince it to stop these acts and go back to the political process. However, now the Palestinians feel alienated from the peace process and feel the danger of the war declared by the Israeli government. So the problem now is not whether negotiations continue or stop. The problem is that the peace process will die and neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians will be in need of talks.

**Israeli officials urged President Arafat to keep any Palestinian reactions quiet and said that the Palestinians have reached the conclusion that if they want to advance the peace process, it's worthwhile for them to be calm. What is your comment?**

What kind of calm and patience do the Israelis seek while they provoke us every minute? What kind of calm amidst the noise of the Israeli bulldozers swallowing up Palestinian lands; the harshness of the Israeli measures in expelling Palestinians from Jerusalem and negating their right to live there; the loudness of the confiscation of Palestinian lands and the closure of Palestinian institutions? No one can accept this. We told the Israelis: if you want the relationship between us to be a chess-like game we are with you, but if you choose boxing and wrestling you will then find a tough opponent.

**What do you think of the US criticism of the decision to build the Har Homa settlement?**

We do not know what has been said behind closed doors. We also do not know the nature of the talks, promises or the official US statements. We have a feeling that the US actually opposes the decision of establishing new Jewish settlements. We hope that this proves to be true, otherwise not only the credibility of the peace process will collapse but also that of the US in the Middle East.

**Following the latest Israeli moves, the Arabs are taking the issue to the UN Security Council. To what extent do you think international law can secure the rights of the Palestinians?**

The resolutions that are issued and implemented are the ones that count, but the ones that are issued and then put in drawers or hung on the walls like the photos of dead fathers and grandfathers cannot secure anything. They only drive people to look for other means to secure their rights.

**The Israeli foreign minister believes that the relationship between the Palestinians and the Israelis is an internal matter and that resorting to any outside arbitration is not justified.**

This is nonsense. The problem between us and the Israelis is not an internal matter. What happens here directly affects the neighbouring countries and the whole Middle East and, therefore, the whole new world order. It affects the political regimes around us. It affects the political and economic climate in the whole region.

**Arabs believe that if Israel is able to build the Har Homa settlement there will be nothing left to decide on regarding Jerusalem at the final status negotiations. What is your comment?**

The Israelis are already deciding the future of Jerusalem now. However, they must know that there can be no peace without Jerusalem, neither can there be any agreement without it. How can they ever think that they will reach any kind of peace by such actions?

**The Israeli press reported that Netanyahu promised to redeploy from a larger part of the West Bank if the Palestinians were able to exercise self-restraint.**

If Netanyahu believes that he can grant us a few kilometres more in the West Bank in exchange for a part of Jerusalem, which he wants to lay his hands on now, so that by the end of the process nothing will be left of Jerusalem, he has certainly miscalculated the whole situation. He will see that this will have detrimental consequences on the whole peace process, as well as the region.

**Do you think that this provocation by the Israeli prime minister is one way of diverting attention from the latest domestic scandal over the appointment of Bar On as an attorney-general, or do you think that it is part of a well calculated plan?**

I think that the present Israeli government is reneging on the whole peace process. The scandal facing Netanyahu may be the direct reason behind the escalation of tensions. He may be trying to save himself, regardless of any sacrifices. However, a closer reading of Netanyahu's history would reveal his arrogance and his understanding of the nature of things, supporting the second hypothesis.

**What is, in your view, the difference between Labour and Likud in dealing with the Jerusalem issue?**

We have always had disagreements with any Israeli government on the issue of Jerusalem. However, the present government is committing continuous violations which can affect the whole peace process. The Labour government used to act within the framework of keeping the peace process going, or at least it did not seek to put an end to it. It would seem that the Likud came to power with the decision to put an end to that process.

**How do you perceive the role the Arabs should play in the coming phase?**

On the political level, the Arabs should have a decisive and united stance vis-à-vis the rest of the world. They must keep Jerusalem as a priority issue on their agenda. We should strengthen ties with the countries that support us and vice-versa. What is happening now is that we do not give countries which support us favourable economic relations, meanwhile we continue establishing economic relations with those who are against us or are supportive of Israel.

On the level of dealing with the Israelis, they must know that there can be no normalisation or enhancement of Arab-Israeli relations without peace.

On the Palestinian level, more coordination is needed as well as more finance, especially for Jerusalem. It is true that some Arab countries offer financial support, but such amounts, compared to those invested by Israel in its battle for Jerusalem, show how much we are lagging behind.

## The struggle for Jebel Abu Ghneim

**In an interview with Graham Usher, Salah Tamari addresses the impact of the Israeli decision to build the Har Homa settlement at Jebel Abu Ghneim on the peace process and the kind of Palestinian protests required to resist it**

*Salah Tamari is an elected Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member for Bethlehem, and activist in the PLO's mainstream Fatah movement. In response to the Israeli government's decision to build the Har Homa settlement inside occupied East Jerusalem, the Emergency Committee for the Defence of Palestinian Lands was formed in Bethlehem and its surrounding villages. Tamari is the Committee's spokesperson.*

**How serious is Israel's decision to build a new Jewish settlement at Jebel Abu Ghneim?**

Har Homa is not just a new Jewish settlement on occupied land. It's much more than that. If built, Har Homa will seal off Jerusalem from Bethlehem, isolate Jerusalem from the West Bank and effectively separate the north West Bank from the south. It also isolates several villages around Bethlehem, forcing Palestinians to take a tough choice between living in their villages or staying on their land.

Israel intends Har Homa to become a city, able to absorb the thousands of pilgrims and tourists who are expected to come to Bethlehem between now and the year 2000. This will strangle Bethlehem economically.

So the situation is very grave. It threatens everything that has so far been accomplished in the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. In essence, the decision invalidates the peace process. How it is handled will shape the future of the peace process.

Had the Likud government had good intentions, it would have raised the matter of Jebel Abu Ghneim with the Palestinian leadership. I'm sure both peoples could have come up with creative solutions that would have contributed to peace.

But the Israeli government did not do this. As usual, it twisted our arm, pointed a gun at our head, took the decision, then asked us to discuss the issue.

**What protest actions is your committee planning?**

We want the protests at Jebel Abu Ghneim to embody the will of the international community. After all, we have signed a peace agreement with Israel, one that is acknowledged by the world.

The protests will be peaceful. We don't want violence and we will endeavour to ensure that the protests stay non-violent. But the situation is obviously explosive. The Israeli prime minister, his government and the army have already started issuing ultimata, talking about snipers and the iron fist etc. We have told the Israelis that we have no interest in causing confrontations. At the same time, we are not going to offer up Jebel Abu Ghneim as a free sacrifice.

**So far the protests have been symbolic rather than mass based ...?**

Jebel Abu Ghneim is likely to be a long struggle. We don't want to consume all our energies at once or overburden our people. This is why the initial protests were small — they have been rather press conferences staged at the site. But I expect the actions will accumulate in a disciplined way, governed by the principles of non-violence and peaceful protest.

**The first protests were mainly joint efforts by local Palestinians and Israeli peace activists. Will this emphasis continue?**

Yes. You see the matter now is no longer Palestinians versus Israelis. When it comes to issues like Jebel Abu Ghneim, it is the peace camp versus the anti-peace camp. And within the peace camp you will find Israelis, Palestinians and others. This is positive. We need to strengthen these ties and build a genuine coalition for peace.

## Abu Ghneim: Chronology of events

1- After the 1967 war, the Israeli government formed a committee responsible for expanding the borders of Greater Jerusalem. As it was uninhabited and close to Jerusalem, Abu Ghneim area was particularly attractive to the work of this committee. Therefore, the border drawn by the committee included all of the Abu Ghneim area inside the borders of annexed 'United Jerusalem'.

2- For twenty years, alleged Jewish landowners, led by Mikor and Himnota companies, were planning to privately build a huge Jewish settlement in the area. They officially appealed to the government of Israel to expropriate all tracts of land at Abu Ghneim and asked the government to grant the right to develop a settlement.

3- On 6 June 1991, the Israeli minister of finance — Mr Isaac Moda'ee — ordered the expropriation of the land tracts of Abu Ghneim mountain. The expropriation order was based on the Lands Law of 1943 which authorises the minister to expropriate lands for public use.

4- Landowners, Palestinian and Israeli, appealed to a special committee against the expropriation of their lands. While landowners were awaiting the decision of that committee, the expropriation procedure was finalised.

5- The Israeli government retreated from its previous agreement with Micor and Himnota companies to build a Jewish settlement on Abu Ghneim, and initiated its own plans to develop the area and to build the planned Jewish settlement.

6- The new government attitudes pushed it into a legal conflict with Israeli landowners. The same company (Micor) who initiated the expropriation procedure, prepared counter plans to privately develop the same area and satisfy the needs of the Jewish public.

7- Based on the minister of finance and the counter plan, the Israeli Supreme Court of Justice issued a conditional verdict freezing the expropriation of the area, and ordered negotiations to start between Micor and the Israeli government.

8- By initiating direct negotiations and through offering large compensations, the Israeli government is trying to cancel the mentioned Supreme Court verdict. Both parties, the Israeli government and Micor company, are still engaged in a legal conflict in the Supreme court.

9- Palestinians from Bethlehem area who privately own land in the Abu Ghneim mountain started a legal fight since 1992 in the Israeli Supreme Court to prevent the building of the Har Homa. Their claims were all rejected.

10- Due to international pressure, the Israeli Labour government decided in early 1996 to freeze the Israeli Har Homa settlement project on Abu Ghneim.

11- The Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem(ARIJ) in mid 1996 objected to the Israeli Supreme Court against building of the Har Homa settlement based on the environmental concerns behind uprooting the majority of the 60,000 pine trees in Abu Ghneim and the destruction of its biodiversity and ecological system. This claim was rejected as well.

12- The present Israeli Likud government, headed by Binyamin Netanyahu, decided in mid 1996 to resume building the Har Homa settlements. Furthermore, the Israeli Mayor of Jerusalem, Ehud Olmert, the national Religious Party and the Israeli Third Way Party pressured Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to build Har Homa, with the Third Way "issuing an ultimatum that if final approval for Har Homa is not given within two weeks, it will leave the (government) coalition" (*The Jerusalem Post*, In Jerusalem, Friday 14 February 1997).

*Data provided by the Applied Research Institute in Jerusalem.*

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# Embracing the network society

Economic reforms, without a far-sighted vision for development, are not enough for sustained growth, argues **M. Shafik Gabr**



Generals are often criticised for trying to fight the previous war. In other words, strategies for success too often are devised with an eye on the past rather than the future. As Egypt gears up to take advantage of the macro-economic stability that has put it on the runway for economic takeoff, it is important that it avoids falling into the same trap.

The stunning expansion of information technology, which has occurred in tandem with the unprecedented demise of global trade barriers and the other trappings of nationalism, is forcing governments and businessmen to think in unfamiliar ways. What we are witnessing is nothing less than that demise of the Industrial Revolution and its closed-circuit support system of protectionism, and the emergence of the Network Society. As a result, we will need to try harder to reach out, to form partnerships that transcend national boundaries and traditional definitions of the chain of production.

While this may seem like an unnecessary and difficult realignment considering that Egypt is just beginning to build a world-class industrial base, much of the world has already taken this step. The ability to conduct real-time international communication through a variety of media, coupled with emerging nations' sophisticated marketing of their comparative advantages regarding labour, technology and the investment environment, has created a future that belongs to those amenable to new ideas. The world's strongest companies operate out of countries that place few, if any, restrictions on trade and investment, and rely heavily on the latest advancements in information technology.

The prescription for Egypt, if the country is to maximise the opportunities inherent in this shift, is simple. Both the government and entrepreneurs must work together in initiating and carrying out reforms.

The government must move swiftly to create the infrastructure of the Network Society. Simply put, this means building links and cutting through red tape. Egypt has already taken strides in the direction of removing obstacles to a business-friendly environment. It has also adopted a remarkably liberal policy regarding the Internet which is the backbone of the global information network. But there is still much work to be done to allow the business-friendly environment to yield tangible results and to construct the necessary physical infrastructure for the efficient use of the Internet. Currently, much of the nation's trade infrastructure is dominated by entrenched monopolies. Port services need to be privatised and, as a result, improved. The telecommunications sector, in particular, must be opened to competitors in order to drive down prices in a way that they no longer impede growth. Moreover, this would also increase efficiency so that Egypt is truly connected and no longer encumbered by only having four million telephone lines for a population of over 60 million. Similarly, the media must be opened up, creating the marketplace for ideas on which any system driven by the philosophy of exchange must rely.

Businessmen, for their part, must learn to do without the network of supports and barriers erected for their benefit. Competing industries must be allowed in if Egyptian firms are to form the partnerships necessary for the expansion of the country's technological capital. Intellectual property must be protected and patent laws should be developed according to a win-win strategy for the mutual interest of the patent holder and the Egyptian consumer.

As with every major transition, the arrival of the Network Society will create its share of hardships. So-called knowledge workers — those with portable technical skills — will create livelihoods that are both more satisfying and more profitable. Traditional industrial workers, however, will be caught in an incredibly competitive and shrinking pool of opportunity as global integration and competition raises efficiency and drives down costs of transactions.

The only way these hardships can be overcome is to embrace them. The door must be thrown open to sectors that can profit the most from the new environment in order to create the maximum number of post-industrial jobs. Heavy investments must then be injected into basic education and job training to give workers the tools required for success and the prevention of the emergence of a new underclass. Ultimately, given the rise of the global economy, we can no longer rely on low cost wages in an environment where there is a high cost for doing business. This, in short, would drive away investors. However, low cost wages coupled with selected, trainable labour and a low transaction cost, is the key for success.

Above all, what is required is vision. The emergence of the Network Society will spawn change at a rate that will make slow reactions impossible. But if we lead the way, we can shape a future that is more humane, less environmentally destructive and richer than what we now know.

*The writer is chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt and member of the US-Egyptian Presidents' Council.*

# Fight over drug patents

Mounting pressures by multinational pharmaceutical companies for the speedy implementation of patent laws has left Egyptian manufacturers on edge. **Aziza Sami** reports

The controversial issue of enforcing drug patent laws well before the year 2005 deadline, as stipulated by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), has once again kicked off waves of protest from Egyptian pharmaceutical manufacturers. The issue was ignited again due to a visit by a high-powered delegation of US and British multinational pharmaceutical company representatives, who met with key government officials and members of the US-Egypt Presidents' Council this week in Cairo.

The purpose of the trip was to lobby the government, which is currently reviewing the drug patent law in force since 1949. The representatives, who are demanding the acceleration of enforcement of patent laws in Egypt — a process which will encompass "process, not just product", argue that any delay in this respect will tarnish Egypt's image as a world market and discourage future investments.

The Presidents' Council, soon to submit a report to President Hosni Mubarak on the issue, has remained divided on how the move could affect this strategic, state-controlled industry. On the one hand, the introduction of revamped patent laws prior to the end of the GATT grace period, could drive up prices of pharmaceuticals with possible repercussions on other industries in the fields of telecommunications and computers.

The most vociferous protests, however, have been voiced by the local pharmaceuticals industry, which currently covers 94 per cent of the consumption of pharmaceuticals in Egypt. This drive for early compliance, local manufacturers believe, is little more than an aggressive campaign with political undertones, launched by multinational companies, and is in direct violation of the GATT-prescribed 10-year transition period designed to give local industry a chance to prepare for competition after 2005.

Opponents say that early enforcement of patent laws will raise the prices of some drugs seven-fold, while affording multinationals both the competitive edge and the legal clout to stop any company from producing a drug which is similar to one produced by one of the multinational companies.

International manufacturers, on the other hand, argue that patent law enforcement will have no negative effects on the industry at present.

"We are asking the government to recognise our inability to secure patents for our products, and give us patent protection for those products not yet introduced in Egypt " said Robert Niemeth chairman-emeritus of Pfizer International and head of the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association's (FPMA) delegation to Cairo. The delegation also included representatives of Bristol Meyers, Squibb, Warner Lamber, Glaxo, Wellcome and Smithkline-Beecham.

"In Egypt [the current law] is for the protection of the product, but not the inventor. Local manufacturers want the country's lawmakers to comply only with the minimum standard," said Niemeth. "Under GATT, Egypt is obligated to provide a 20-year patent protection for products and processes by the year 2005, which is the minimum, but not the only, standard."

Niemeth added that, "the early implementation of patent law will give Egypt's pharmaceuticals industry access to know-how and the opportunity to create business relations with foreign companies."

"Companies like mine do not transfer special knowledge to places where it will not be protected," he stressed. "If nothing happens from now to 2005 — no change in the basic character of the industry — then Egypt's reputation as a partner in the future will be diminished".

Niemeth added that in the area of pharmaceuticals a patent is given to the inventor of a product for 20 years. For about 10 to 12 years, the owner of a patent is entitled to sell it exclusively so that they can derive a reward for inventing something that is new. "The patent law, if introduced immediately, will only affect future products, not those currently produced," he explained.

"Egypt would be damaging its economic interest if it takes 10 years to adopt patent laws, because without this, multinational companies will take their investments, capital, technology and alliances elsewhere," he reiterated. "Egypt can only gain by... adopting patent laws, rather than remain among the small group of countries... viewed as pirates or pariahs because they confiscate the inventions of others. It is a shame that Egypt should take advantage of the properties of others."

"These [laws] are really efforts by industrialised countries to protect their products while accessing new markets," said Galal Ghorab, chairman of the Holding Company for Pharmaceuticals, Chemicals and Medical Instruments (HCPCMI), who has led a campaign opposing early patent law enforcement.

"A premature enforcement of patent laws will deprive local industry of its rights of manufacture and production in one of the largest and most strategic Egyptian industries," he noted.

"To compromise or be tempted by the carrot of future technology transfer and investment would only lead to very serious repercussions," argued Ghorab. "It is precisely in areas such as the health sector, where economic or legislative reform would have a decided social impact, that GATT has prescribed periods of transition before opening up to market forces."

Ghorab said that there are currently around 3,000 kinds of medicines produced in Egypt — of which five per cent are under patent — where the total consumption is the equivalent of LE3.1 billion. With the new patent laws, the prices of medication in this stratum will increase by five to seven per cent.

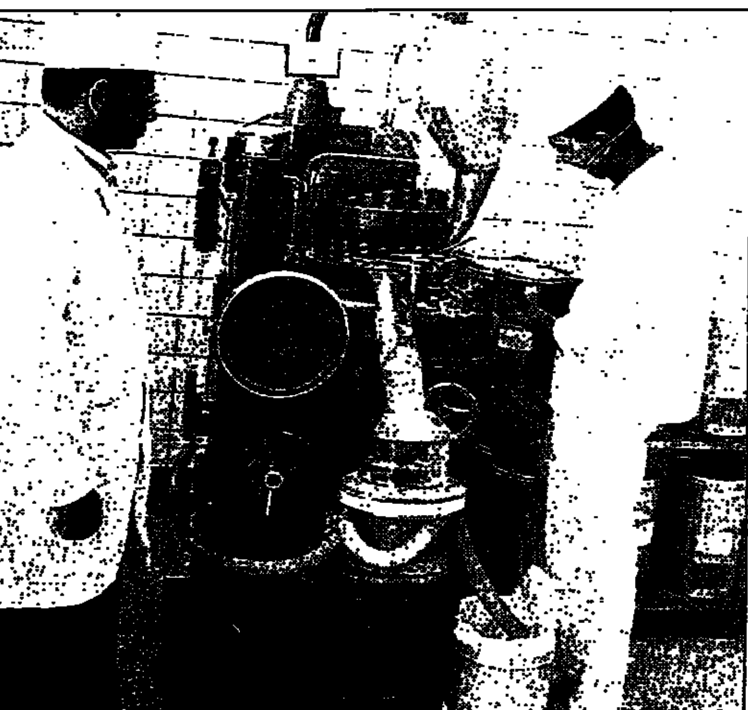
There are also 50 kinds of new medicines which are introduced into the Egyptian market per year, all of which are subject to patent laws and are sold at prices fixed by the patent holder. These drugs, therefore, are not subject to competition.

Criticising the patent law which places the burden of proof of non-violation on the accused party, Ghorab said this, in itself, contradicts legal principles and means that any patent-holder can halt the production of medicine by a local company. In the event a patent violation is determined, the patent-holder then has the right to confiscate the product and the means of production.

Local manufacturers, he added, cannot counter these effects without being granted the prerequisite transitional period necessary for adequate preparation for entry into a free market.

"We have, for instance, started to establish a joint-venture company with the private sector in order to upgrade Egyptian pharmaceuticals companies," Ghorab stated.

In addition, he noted, the argument concerning increasing foreign investments is not valid because major foreign companies, such as Squibb and Glaxo, have been operating freely in Egypt since the 1960s and were never subject to nationalisation. "Over the past 30 years, Pfizer, Heochst and Swiss Pharma, have all also entered the Egyptian market and faced no restrictions on their investments or operations," said Ghorab.



Egypt's pharmaceutical industry is up in arms over drug patent laws

# Cost of reform debated

While a Shura Council report on the economic reform programme spoke of great achievements, opposition members lashed out at the high social cost of reform. **Gamal Essam El-Din** attended

Egypt's economic reform programme may have led to accumulating high bank reserves, cutting inflation rates, reducing the budget deficit and creating a stable exchange rate. However, members of the consultative upper house of parliament, the Shura Council, were sharply divided this week over the impact of the programme's fiscal and monetary policies on social welfare and productivity rates. Opposition members cited the high rate of unemployment, corruption, onerous bureaucratic measures, a high trade deficit and the sharp imbalance between wages and prices to emphasise that the reform has come about at a high social cost. Leading members of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), however, said that growing pains were to be expected during the first stages of reform, but that next stage of the programme will eventually lead to boosting economic growth and reducing unemployment.

It was a report on "The Assessment of the First and Second Stages of the Economic Reform Plan and the Objectives of the Third Stage" that fueled the flames of discontent in the Council. The 189-page report, which was prepared by the Council's Financial and Economic Committee, pointed the finger at the Nasser era for embracing policies which it said were largely responsible for the present economic hardships in Egypt.

According to the report, the first and second stages of economic reform have yielded amazing results. The first stage, which began in 1981, said the report, focused on revamping infrastructure projects, With this aim, nearly LE181 billion was spent on new roads, electricity stations, telecommunication networks, railway tracks, and water and drainage projects. In 1991, the report added, the government embarked upon the second stage of the programme. This stage initiated massive fiscal and monetary reforms.

"The implementation of this stage came too late because the government officials entrusted with implementing this programme were still not entirely aware of the programme's importance," stated the report. "They were, in short, still shackled by a socialist economic mentality."

Nevertheless, the monetary and fiscal reforms instituted during this stage were quite successful. According to the report, the budget deficit dropped from 24.7 per cent in 1987 to as low as 1.5 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 1995. It also noted that the inflation rate declined from 21.4 per cent in 1990 to 5 per cent in 1997. And, while in 1989 the balance of payments deficit had reached $634 million, by 1995, the country had realised a surplus of $800 million. The report indicated that although the payment balance achieved a surplus of $5.1 billion in 1992, it declined to $800 million in 1995 due to the trade deficit and the decline in direct foreign investments.

In monetary terms, the report indicated that the 1991 liberalisation of banking interest rates in Egypt led to an increase in bank reserves from LE48 billion in 1989 to LE138.5 billion in 1995. Similarly, foreign exchange deposits rose from $385 million in 1989 to $1.7 billion in 1995. As a whole, the report indicated, the foreign exchange bank reserves rose from $17 billion in 1994 to $18.6 billion in June 1996. It also noted that the revival of the stock market, "which was strangled by the nationalisation policies of 1960s", led to an increase in the number of companies registered on the market from 318 in 1985 to 615 by the end of 1996. During the same period, the number of securities traded rocketed up from 3.2 million in 1985 to 1.661 billion in 1996.

As part of economic reform policies, private investments in national development plans climbed from LE5.7 billion in 1987 to around LE46.2 billion in 1992. In the third five-year development plan (1992-97), the report added, private investments climbed to roughly LE70 billion.

The third stage of the economic reform programme, which began last year, said the report, focuses on achieving an "economic boom" through a number of incentives. Topping its list of goals are raising growth rates to 7 per cent per year, redressing the trade balance, implementing a number of giant development projects and improving the performance of government administrative agencies. But these goals, noted the report, are seriously jeopardised by the government's failure to take decisive action against bureaucratic corruption and red tape.

Whatever criticisms contained in the report were mild in comparison to those voiced by some Shura members which, in turn, were responded to by Zaki Abu Amer, minister of state for parliamentary affairs.

Mostafa Kamel Murad, leader of the Liberal Party, drew attention to the fact that Egypt has chalked up a LE150 billion domestic debt.

"This staggering amount, which carries with it an annual interest of LE16 billion, is seriously undermining development plans," Murad said. He also accused the government of not paying enough attention to the social costs of economic reform. According to Murad, unemployment has become so severe that around 20,000 Egyptian workers finally left the country in search of work in Israel where, on average, they are paid the equivalent of LE17 per hour. "This exodus of able workers represents a very serious threat to the nation's economy and security," he stressed. Murad also argued that the extension of the emergency law last week by the People's Assembly will negatively affect private investments. "This law comes at a time when the government is desperately seeking as much as LE10 billion in investments per year," said Murad. He added that subsidies for limited-income households should be phased out "so that market forces will be reflected in real wages and real prices".

# Capital markets need boost

More than a vehicle for realising quick profits, financial markets play a key role in a country's economic development, writes **Niveen Wahish**

A two-day conference entitled "Towards an Efficient Financial Market in Egypt", organised by the Egyptian Centre for Economic Studies (ECES), focused on how the current economic reforms have affected the banking and capital market sectors.

Boasting a guest list of Egyptian and international economic experts, the conference, according to the Central Bank of Egypt's (CBE) Faika El-Rifaie, noted that while many restrictions have been lifted as part and parcel of the economic reform programme, there is still a good deal of work to be done. To date, the reforms in the banking sector have included the liberalisation of interest and exchange rates on the Egyptian pound, the elimination of foreign currency exchange controls and the amendment of the banking and credit law, thereby permitting majority ownership for foreigners in joint-venture banks. Furthermore, banks have been given the freedom to set rates on their financial services and the unrestricted transfer of capital in and out of the country.

Coupled with these reforms, however, El-Rifaie recommended that the privatisation of banks be accelerated, pertinent information be more readily accessible to the public, that greater use be made of employee training programmes and that an automated clearing and payment network system be initiated.

But a major drawback in the banking sector, as noted by Ziad Bahaa El-Din of the Hashem, Ibrahim and Tawfik law firm, and Mahmoud Mohieddin of the ECES, is the inadequate regulatory mechanisms governing this sector. In a paper presented at the conference on the subject, they pointed out that the banking sector has neither a clear-cut outline of regulatory responsibility for multinational banks, nor formal guidelines for disclosure of information. In cases where these rules do exist, they are either ignored or relaxed and state-owned banks are often granted preferential treatment.

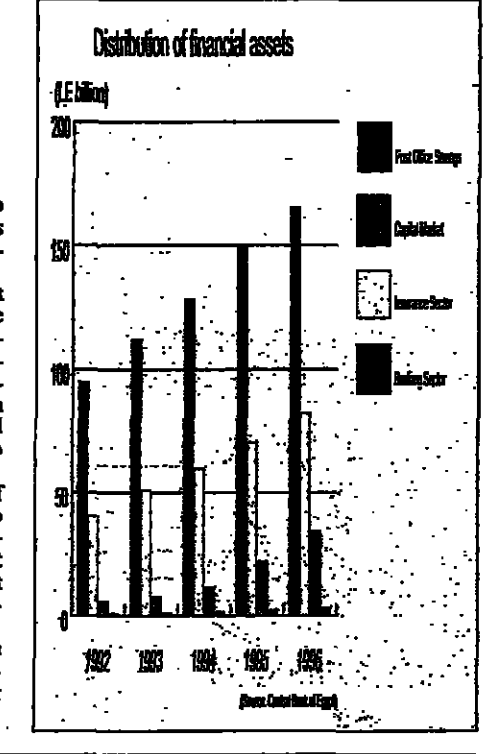
While much of the conference's discussions revolved around the banking sector and the capital market, many participants stressed that the insurance sector is also an integral part of the financial market. According to some insurance sector representatives in attendance, "insurance companies can participate in promoting the capital market and direct investments".

Similarly, attracting investments, which is also a key part of economic development, was viewed by participants as the product of an improved financial system.

Alan Roe of the World Bank noted that "direct and portfolio in-flows are necessary to enhance the speed of economic development by enforcing domestic saving, supplying foreign technical skills and managerial enhancement systems." He also argued that the benefit of foreign capital in-flow will be greater if directed toward productive investments rather than portfolio management.

However, Youssef Boutros Ghali, minister of state for economic affairs, stressed that portfolio investments are no less important than direct investments because investors would be reluctant to enter a market unless they are certain that they can find a buyer for their project if they decide to leave the country.

In addition, he pointed out that besides foreign investments, Egyptian savings must first be attracted. "Egyptian savings will the be factor that determines Egypt's economic growth," he said.




## Epoch-making credit rating

MINISTER of state for economic affairs, Youssef Boutros Ghali, last week stressed that Egypt's recent credit rating by Standard & Poor's (S&P) not only means that greater investments will be pouring into the country, but that the country now also shoulders greater responsibilities. **Niveen Wahish** reports

Addressing a gathering hosted by the Economic Research Forum (ERF) for the Middle East, Iran and Turkey, Ghali explained that a rating is allocated on a scale of one to 30, the first twelve being investment-grade ratings. Egypt's triple B- grade puts it on the 12th step.

"We have taken one step into the investment grade variety," he said, adding that this grade puts Egypt on the international investment map. An annual amount of $1.5 billion to $2 billion in investments is expected to flow into Egypt as a result of this rating.

S&P's rating places Egypt on par with Greece, which, according to Ghali, has European Union backing. It also puts Egypt on equal footing with Poland as well as India, China and Indonesia. Ghali also said that this rating reversed the international community's misconception that Egypt was way behind the pack in terms of development. The rating, however, said Ghali, changes the way the government must handle the economy.

"We have to adjust the structure of the economy to international standards," he said, explaining that the rating has changed both the substitutability of Egyptian securities and the dynamics of portfolio allocation in Egypt.

For example, all the variables linked to securities, such as the interest rate, the return on investments and the inflation rate, have to equal their equivalents on the international scene.

Ghali also pointed out the necessity of improving the current saving rate of 18 percent which, he stated, is too low for the country to be able to achieve the targeted growth rate of seven to eight per cent or to maintain the current growth rate of five per cent.

According to Ghali, Egypt can no longer do as it pleases with its economy, because it will be subject to judgment. "If we depart from international standards, we would be penalised." he said. Therefore, the government plans to move forward with the reforms by maintaining financial discipline and accelerating the privatisation programme.

Adel El-Labban, managing director of the Commercial International Bank, chairing the meeting, also highlighted the fact that "anything below investment grade rating is junk." However, he warned, "we are still on the edge". The rating, he explained, is not a "one-time thing".

"We will continue to be scrutinised," stressed El-Labban, adding that the Egyptian economy should use the momentum gained from the S&P rating as an incentive to increase its standing on the investment grade scale.

El-Labban also said that the S&P rating is given to the country as a whole, therefore, "everyone has a vested interest in working towards improving the rating".

## Bear, then bull, then bear again

FOLLOWING weeks of increasing activity, the capital market has finally taken what analysts consider a corrective step. The General Market Index plunged by 18.36 points to close at 404.35 for the week ending 27 February. This decrease marks the greatest drop since the market started its upward trend last November. During this four-month period, the GMI rocketed up by 200 points, an 83 per cent surge that left market experts worried about the impact on the market when the index dropped. Analysts attributed the latest drop to an investors' rush to sell high-value shares in order to benefit from capital gains.

The drop, however, did not prevent Al-Ahram Beverage Company (ABC) from capturing the spotlight. With trading of its shares accounting for 38.98 per cent of total market turnover, ABC traded LE364 million in shares, its stock closing at LE156 per share, LE17 ahead of their opening value. Housing companies, after weeks of watching their stocks surge in value, now watched them decline. The Urbanisation and Popular Houses Company was the market's biggest loser, its shares realising a 22.5 per cent loss in value to close at LE36.47. Shares of the Heliopolis Housing and Urbanisation Company lost LE34 to close at LE425 while those of Medinat Nasr Housing and Urbanisation fell by LE49 to level off at LE447.

It was, however, the unexpected surge in the trading of Housing Bonds 2000/2015, that left both analysts and investors surprised. The bonds topped the market in terms of the volume of transactions, with 3.6 million bonds changing hands.

In the financial sector, shares of both Credit International Bank and Nationale Societé Generale gained LE32 each to settle at LE755 and LE1312 respectively.

In all, the shares of 51 companies increased in value, 28 decreased and 34 remained unchanged.

# Stock market economics



**Mohamed El-Erian** discusses the role of the stock market in the process of economic development

The spectacular performance of the Cairo stock market in 1996 and into the first few weeks of 1997 has attracted considerable domestic and international attention. While the majority of the discussion has focused on investors' profits and losses, it is also important to take note of the role the stock market can and should play in a country's economic development. This article looks at three issues: the recent performance of the Egyptian stock market; the reasons behind increased investor interest in the market; and the actual, as well as potential, role the market plays in Egypt's continuing structural reform initiatives.

Few international stock markets, over the last year or so, have rivaled the performance of the Cairo exchange. For example, the Egyptian Financial Group's (EFG) all-share price index rose in dollar terms by a little over 40 per cent in 1996, with an additional gain of another 40 per cent in the first six weeks of 1997.

The surge in stock prices was accompanied by a dramatic increase in the volume of trading, considerable new issuance activity (largely associated with the government's privatisation programme), and a broadening of traded instruments. These factors are all important indicators of the development of the market. Between 1994 and 1996, the volume of trading rose by around 250 per cent, the value of trading by 330 per cent, and the number of new issues by 321 per cent. Moreover, figures for the first six weeks of 1997 point to a continuation of these trends.

In part, these figures may be attributed to a significant broadening of the investor base — a factor which has been fueled by the establishment of domestic mutual funds and an increase in international investor interest in Egyptian stocks. The group of foreign investors is reported to have accounted for over 30 per cent of all trading activity in the last nine months of 1996.

There are four main reasons why these developments have taken place. First, the steady implementation of sound economic policies by the Egyptian government has improved the risk/return equation confronting investors in the stock market and, more generally, the economy. The development experience of various countries have shown that macro-economic stability is a necessary, although not a sufficient condition for larger private sector investment and a healthy stock market. With a budget deficit heading to under one percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), inflation of 5-6 per cent and foreign exchange reserves of about $19 billion, Egypt has achieved a considerable degree of macro-economic stability. In 1996, the country's strong macroeconomic policies were accompanied by an intensification of its structural reform initiatives, thereby enhancing the prospects for sustained economic growth and increasing corporate profits. The privatisation programme, in particular, not only raises the prospects for a more efficient and profitable corporate sector, but also increases the range of paper being traded on the stock market and helps stimulate interest in the market.

Second, the stock market's infrastructure has been undergoing continuous development, including efforts directed at upgrading the payments and settlement systems, strengthening regulatory and supervisory practices and enhancing information flow. These efforts improve the level and nature of domestic and foreign investor access to the market, and play an important role in ensuring more efficient market functioning and boosting investor confidence.

Third, there has been a remarkable response on the part of domestic and foreign private institutions. On the domestic front, we have witnessed, in reaction to the greater investor demand, an upgrading of the capabilities of, and services provided by, several companies. There has also been important consolidation among companies and, for others, the emergence of strategic alliances with foreign firms. Several domestic mutual funds have been established and enlarged, accompanied by the creation of "Egypt Country Funds" in foreign stock markets. In addition, both domestic and foreign firms have stepped up the flow of information to the public about general market conditions, as well as company-specific data at a time when Egypt has been included as part of the International Finance Corporation's (IFC) global composite index, and received an investment-grade credit rating from Standard and Poor's.

Finally, with the large price increases recorded by the market, a growing number of people simply want "to get a piece of the action." Word of mouth is spreading, with a growing interest at the retail end of the market.

But, why are these developments worth thinking about in the context of Egypt's development process? While there are some dissenting opinions, most economists believe that stock markets can play two critical functions in the development of a market economy. First, they can be efficient vehicles for mobilising savings from small, medium, and large-scale savers, and allocating these savings to the corporate sector to help finance long-term productive investment. Stock prices also act as a signal of a firm's efficiency. The market, including through the merger and acquisition process, uses these signals to impose discipline by ensuring that the most efficient firms are rewarded, while also providing a channel for the orderly and early restructuring of the least efficient.

Unfortunately, there is nothing automatic about these functions. Moreover, it is when these functions fail to materialise that legitimate criticism mounts about the unproductive nature of stock market activity.

Currently, in Egypt, an increasing number of firms are mobilising new funds through the stock market. New issues (equities and bonds) amounted to LE21 billion ($6 billion) in 1996. This is an encouraging development as it enhances the flow of funds to the corporate sector for the creation of new investment, production, and employment opportunities. The stock market has also acted as an important vehicle for transferring state-owned enterprises to the private sector. However, and not surprisingly given the stage of development of the Egyptian stock market and the private corporate sector, merger and acquisition activity has, to date, been extremely limited.

Looking forward, at least five factors will be instrumental in maximising the role of the stock market in the development of the Egyptian economy, the first of which is the continued implementation of sound economic policies. This is imperative because without a supportive environment, the stock market will not be able to contribute effectively to mobilising and channeling funds to the most productive investments.

Second, the foundations of the development process require the continued strengthening of market infrastructure, the institutional base, regulation and supervision of financial institutions, and protection of investors.

The third factor involves the provision of more comprehensive information to investors. Strong disclosure requirements for companies are important not only in enabling investors to make informed decisions, but also to minimise disorderly behaviour when there are market corrections, as inevitably there are in every stock market in the world.

Fourth is improving the ability of investors to digest information about the market and companies. This process of education enables the markets to function well and minimise, in the now famous words of Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the US Federal Reserve Board, "irrational exuberance" on the part of investors.

Finally, the continued development of the Egyptian corporate sector, with a growing number of firms evolving away from a closed structure to an open joint-venture, will maximise the outlets for productive funding of investment, as well as complement government efforts to broaden the range of paper trading on the market.

*The writer is the deputy director of the Middle Eastern Department of the International Monetary Fund. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the IMF.*

Edited by **Ghada Ragab**

# Madeleine Albright: made in America

In shedding her old identity and taking on a new one, Madeleine Albright followed one traditional path of the American immigrant, writes **Edward Said**

Although she has recently been triumphantly touring the world in her first trip as secretary of state, Madeleine Albright has been at the heart of a considerable amount of controversy in the United States at the same time. The issue concerns her discovery a few weeks ago that her Czechoslovakian grandparents had been victims of the Nazis, and had perished as Jews in a concentration camp.

Later revelations came to light in which other members of her immediate family suffered a similar fate, although, Albright has said, her parents never made her aware of these facts. She was raised as a Catholic girl and later converted to Episcopalianism when she got married. Her teenage years were spent as a schoolgirl in London before her family emigrated to the United States, and then became American citizens; she then finished school and university before coming to Washington to work for Zbigniew Bzrezinski (who had supervised her graduate work at Columbia University) during the Carter administration.

For about 30 years, therefore, she has said that she believed herself to be what her parents had told her she was, a Catholic Czech girl whose parents had escaped from Nazism and then communism. Clearly disconcerted by her discovery of a tragic family history, she did not say very much to the press about her feelings before she left on her trip. Yet a long article in *The New York Times* reported that an older cousin, a girl with whom she had grown up in London, someone very close to her, had written to her several times in the past three years about her family's tragic past without receiving any answer. Similarly, the article revealed that after she became the United States UN representative, the mayor of her family's town in Czechoslovakia had also written to her with news about her past, although he too received no acknowledgment or answer from Albright.

Adding to the difficulty of trying to sort out what is true from what is not in an obviously delicate and sensitive situation, there is the fact that Albright herself is an unattractive and even unpleasant person. At the UN she had a reputation for bullying, laziness and rudeness. As a way of pleasing Clinton, she personally intervened several times to stop, or at least delay, shipments of humanitarian supplies to Iraq. On her way to unseating the hapless Warren Christopher she tried always to establish a reputation for toughness. She once surprised Colin Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, by saying to him in public that it was no good having the most powerful army in the world if one did not use it. During the early part of 1995, with the help of Vice-President Al Gore, she tried unsuccessfully to prevent a settlement in former Yugoslavia, again as a method of proving her toughness. To the best of my knowledge she does not seem to have any ideas of her own, but repeats the same clichés and tired formulas left over from the Cold War with the express purpose of reminding everyone that as the only remaining superpower, the United States is entitled to lead the world and more or less to tell everyone else what to do. On the whole then, Madeleine Albright cannot be accused of great refinement of temperament.

Still, the dilemma in which she has found herself is unenviable. Most right-wing and Jewish commentators have suggested that she knew that she was Jewish all along, but that she hid her real identity in order to get ahead professionally. There is some plausibility to this. She and I belong to the same generation, and I can recall quite distinctly that within the Eastern WASP Establishment 30 or 40 years ago it was a real liability to be Jewish. The university I attended as an undergraduate between 1953 and 1957, Princeton, was notorious for limiting the number of Jews who were admitted; the same was true of Harvard and Yale. And one of the things I noticed at Princeton was that the relatively small number of Jewish students tended to be segregated in their own clubs, associations, etc., though there were also a number of these Jewish students who were considered "passers," that is, they passed themselves as non-Jews, hiding their identity in order to become a member of a desirable club. So deeply racist was the atmosphere then that during my four years at Princeton I can remember quite clearly that there was only one black student in the entire university. Albright's college was Wellesley, an upper-class women's university, where the same kind of atmosphere prevailed as at Princeton and Harvard: perhaps then she made a decision to conceal her background. Certainly for someone who wanted a career in diplomacy or national security it must have seemed tempting to continue the disguise, especially since the State Department was notorious for its anti-semitic biases. Diplomats were supposed to be not only white but Protestant, and also from a good family.

All this is pure speculation of course, since we really do not have a way of knowing whether she deliberately concealed the facts of her family's past. On the other hand it is worth noting that a cardinal point in the American ideology is that Americans are "new" people, individuals who have come here precisely in order to shed their old identities and acquire new ones instead. The whole mystique of the immigration process is that every new American is like Adam or Eve, someone whose past has been cast off in order to be able to participate in the life, riches, unlimited opportunities offered to every citizen by God's country, the new Israel. As part of the Americanisation process in this country of immigrants, taking on a new name, and even a new past, were essential. Millions of refugees from Eastern Europe who came here during the great waves of modern immigration early this century were in fact given new names at Ellis Island, the famous entrance point, now a museum, in New York harbour, by immigration inspectors who found it impossible to pronounce extremely complicated and long Polish or Lithuanian names. So it is very probable, indeed likely, that Albright's parents came to the United States and did what so many others did, left their old lives, along with the horrors of the Nazi genocide, deliberately behind them. Doing that meant giving their child a chance at a new life in a new country.

This act of self-destruction by which the American becomes a self-created person is still taken quite seriously. *About ten years ago my friendship* with an Arab scholar from Lebanon ended when he informed me that having become an American he no longer wanted to be part of Middle Eastern conflicts that people like me wanted him to be involved in. I came here to become a new person, he wrote me in a letter, and so I no longer want to have anything to do with you since you want to go on fighting the Palestine question and other Middle East conflicts over here. We have never spoken since, even though he has become a very well-known television commentator on the Middle East despite his protestations about starting a new life.

Nevertheless another situation arose in the late 1960s, partly as a result both of the civil rights and women's movements. A new politics of identity developed whereby Americans who had hitherto accepted the homogeneity of a uniform American identity, embodied in the so-called melting-pot theory that claimed that once they became Americans all citizens were alike despite their different backgrounds, now felt the need to recover their forgotten or unknown roots. It was no longer sufficient that one was simply an American; there had to be a re-discovery of one's real, and often buried, identity. Many blacks, for example, began to make an effort to understand and experience their African past; the movement on behalf of a Jewish identity that was unassimilated to American society rose to great prominence, especially after Israel's victory in the 1967 war. It became important to wear ethnic clothes, eat ethnic food, learn the original language, and generally become immersed in precisely that dense former history that the new country, America, had asked everyone to give up. It was a result of this pervading sense of complex identity that when she took up her job at the United Nations four years ago Madeleine Albright stressed her Czech origins, which were always in the forefront of any press description, and gave her image a noticeable boost. A great deal was also made of her various returns to her homeland, once in the company of Hillary Clinton, her friend, and fellow-Wellesley graduate.

Her moral and spiritual dilemmas, compounded by public attention, are finally Madeleine Albright's alone, which she must resolve for herself in private. There is one overriding factor, however. She is now a fully accredited member of the power structure of the United States and as such has been absorbed into it at the very highest level. Her silence about the revelations recently made public strikes one as stemming from two sources. One is embarrassment and chagrin at having her past history made into a subject for public speculation, along with the accusations of bad faith and unreliability. The other is consciousness that as secretary of state, which is the highest position in the cabinet and the highest position ever achieved by a woman, she is unassailable because the office's tremendous power protects her completely. Enfolded in that eminence she can afford to be silent about her private self, though at what cost I would not like to speculate.

# Washington's China box

The Western watch is on China and there are land mines ahead, writes **Eqbal Ahmed**

With Deng Xiaoping has passed the most eventful century of China's millennial history. The 92-year-old revolutionary leader had lived through nearly all of the 20th century, and was either a witness to or participant in the four revolutions that shaped modern China. Of the latest revolution — China's transformation into an economic giant — he was the principal architect.

He was born at the low ebb of Chinese civilisation — after the Opium Wars and the Boxer and Taiping rebellions — when Chinese resistance was exhausted, the doors to China were open to Western imperial powers, and China was prey to chronic famines, greedy warlords and the greedier imperialists. He died as China was entering the world as an economic giant and a superpower.

Deng was seven-years-old in 1911, when Sun-Yat Sen led the national revolution that overthrew the Manchu Dynasty and inaugurated the Chinese Republic. That revolution failed to build a modern Chinese state, but ignited the spirit of the younger generation of revolutionaries, among them Mao Zedong and the aide he nicknamed as "the little man in a hurry".

Deng joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1924, and in 1931 Mao's Red Army in Jiangxi. He was on the Long March (1934-35) — the Red Army's epic trek through 13,000km, 18 mountains and 24 rivers of enemy-infested territory — so memorably described in Edgar Snow's classic *Red Star over China*. He was present in 1949, as a founding father of the second republic, the People's Republic of China.

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) his fortunes fluctuated. In 1967, he was purged and exiled to Jiangxi, in 1973 rehabilitated as vice-premier, in 1976 purged again and in 1978 Deng began his rise to supreme power when at the third plenum of the 11th Central Committee, the party's reformist faction took control.

Deng Xiaoping was already 78-years-old when he had the power to formulate policy. There was perhaps a capitalist streak in his Sichuan peasant genes. He was surely a pragmatist and a ruthless one. "Whether a cat is black or white makes no difference," he claims to have told Mao while arguing for economic reforms, "as long as it catches mice it is a good cat." Deng's "socialism with Chinese characteristics" entailed applying market tools to China's states-owned economy — freeing prices, permitting profit incentives, promoting competition and trading globally.

The timing was right. China was ready for innovations. A vast infrastructure was in place, a literate and skilled population was eager to get back to work after the depredations of the Cultural Revolution and people were wearied of ideological mystification but keen on pragmatic solutions and material well being. The intelligentsia was intent on rejoining the economy with the skills it had to offer. Deng's reforms hit fertile soil.

Two decades later the results appear astounding. Never before in human history has such a large population — 1.2 billion — improved its living standards so dramatically. Never before in world affairs had so rapid and unexpected a shift in economic and political power been witnessed in peace time. China's economic growth since 1978 has averaged nine per cent, the per capita income in rural areas has tripled to more than $1,000, and a lot more in the urban areas.

China's impoverished and austere collective society is now in the throes of fevered consumerism. In 1979, one per cent of Chinese households owned television. In 1995, 90 per cent owned colour sets. In 1979, virtually no one owned a private car. Today, 2.5 million families do, and demand continues to outstrip supply.

Individual affluence in China is still far from comparable to advanced industrial countries. But the economy as a whole, being one of the world's 10 largest, has moved from the third to the first world. And it is still growing. In 1995, China's foreign exchange reserve stood at $79 billion. In 1996, it was $130 billion. In 1995, it had a trade surplus of $30 billion against the United States; in 1996, this surplus increased to $38.5 billion. Foreign investors compete to invest in China; the foreign capital inflow in 1996 alone was a whopping $50 billion. Nearly half of the world economy is in East Asia today. China alone can keep advancing this trend as its weight will be greatest when Hong Kong joins it in July.

By the middle of the 21st century China may be the world's dominant power. Because the stakes are so high, the Western world's watch is on China. There are land mines ahead. "To get rich is glorious" was a Deng favourite.

But there is trouble when the glory is not equitably distributed. China's economy runs on four tracks — state, collective, private, and foreign sectors — which ensures uneven development. Pockets of misery can serve as enormous powder kegs among more than a billion people.

Unemployment has raised its ugly head in a country committed to full employment. Some 40 of China's 147 million industrial workers are jobless. The Ministry of Labour projects that unemployment will reach 260 million in a decade. A third of the state enterprises lose money and are unfit for privatisation. If they are shut, unemployment will increase. Corruption is rampant and reaches high echelons, putting into question the credibility of government and party. Living standards are low in the remote and outlying states such as western China where the Muslim populace has been suffering from a protracted cycle of rebellion and repression.

The long list of China's actual and potential troubles leads the media and some experts in the West to build gloomy scenarios of China's future. They mention as serious problems the possible leadership vacuum and infighting, the gap between political and economic development, and the resistance of Chinese Communist Party leaders to liberalising the polity.

These warnings may well be exaggerated. To some extent they reflect frustration over Chinese disregard of Western models and advice. In contrast to Russia, China's reform agenda developed indigenously, from ideological struggles inside the party. Take the cases of Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang. These two of Deng Xiaoping's three chosen successors lost out because they favoured Western models.

Said Deng, their erstwhile ally: "Both men failed and it was not because of economic problems. It was on the question of not opposing bourgeois liberalisation that both men came a cropper."

The third man, Jiao Zemin, 70, replaced Zhao Ziyang in 1989 as provisional secretary-general of the Communist Party. In 1992, the former mayor of Shanghai was confirmed at the party's helm. In 1993, he became president and commander of the armed forces. He leads with a politburo that has been governing China for nearly five years. They include Prime Minister Li Peng, 68, adopted son of the redoubtable Zhou Enlai after his father was killed by the Kuomintang. Reform-minded and grass roots party leaders still predominate the ruling group in China today. It is unlikely that they will produce a crisis of succession or governance.

The West, especially the United States, is likely to stay entrapped in its China box, now drooling, now sniping. It is too large and lucrative a market to miss out. But China is also emerging as a world power with its own agenda in international relations. That is not to Washington's liking. The ambivalence is compounded by the vacillations of American capital. Seven years after the Cold War's end, it remains ambivalent between what radical analysts call the Yankees and Cowboys of American capitalism. It will be a mistake though to view them as dialectical opposite. They are twins.

The Cold War fueled the American economy with military Keynesianism. The ever-growing military budget gave rise to the trillion dollar military-industrial complex. Defence contracts subsidised research and development on a large scale. Defense purchases guaranteed annual sales of expensive hardware. The Pentagon aided lucrative sales of weapons to allies and clients. The American economy and employment structure became so tied to a war economy that seven years after the Cold War has ended there is no sign of economic restructuring or real decline in defense spending. Yet, deep cuts remain a threat as long as there exist no evil empire against which generous spending could be justified. One has tried others in vain — terrorism, Islam, drug cartels — paper tigers all.

China, on the other hand, is a specter to countenance. Among the most vocal champions in Washington of human rights in China are lobbyists and legislators connected to defense contractors, the same ones who have long been in bed with the worst tyrants of modern times. They are invariably supported by pro-Israeli columnists and lobbyists.

Then there are the Yankees of American capital, the multinationals that seek ever deeper global reach. They had never dreamed of markets as large and as rapidly growing as China's. To let it slip to the others would be "dumb as dumb can be". No American president can ignore their demands and their needs as they are the backbone of American power and the heart beat of its economy. Hence the China box in which Clinton sits, and from which Madeleine Albright will now make her contrary gestures. The Chinese know and do sternly silence the "pale barbarians" when they become too loud.



CUBAN President Fidel Castro offered the Tupac Amaro rebels political asylum at the urging of Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, who visited Havana on Tuesday to seek Castro's help in ending the three-months long hostage crisis. But the rebels, who still hold 72 captives in the Japanese Embassy in Lima, rejected the offer demanding instead the liberation of their imprisoned comrades (photo:Reuters)

# Containing Russia in Asia

Albright's Asian tour offered no panache, but a message for Europe and Russia writes **Jooneed Khan**

Madeleine Albright's Asian swing last week had none of the strategic panache that surrounded her European crusade the week before to fast-track NATO expansion to the borders of Russia and to "make Europe whole again".

Her Beijing stop, the centerpiece of the unprecedented Asian leg of her whirlwind nine-nation "maiden voyage" as US Secretary of State, lost its edge when paramount leader Deng Xiaoping expired on 19 February, while Albright was still in Europe.

Without specifically asking for a postponement of her visit, the Chinese quickly announced they wanted no foreigners at Deng's funeral. She insisted on coming. Beijing graciously assented, but packed four hours of non-stop meetings on the same day with President Jiang Zemin, Premier Li Peng and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, making sure she left before the funeral by canceling all banquets and sight-seeing tours.

"Albright leaves China empty-handed", the MSNBC network headlined on the Internet, referring specifically to human rights and non-proliferation issues. The secretary of state put her own "positive spin" on her Beijing stop, saying she was thankful that it took place at all, given her circumstances.

But already in South Korea and Japan, which she visited before China, reporters noted that Ms Albright was rather discreet, after making loud headlines across Europe. Posing for pictures in Tokyo, she declined to answer questions.

Explaining why Asia was part of the trip, she had told reporters at the outset that she wanted to "get down to a common agenda in both Europe and Asia because we have vital strategic economic interests in both areas".

Yet after bulldozing her way through Europe with an agenda to speed up enlargement of NATO to former Warsaw Pact members, whether Russia likes it or not, she articulated no "grand design" for Asia.

Instead, her Seoul stop was overshadowed by North Korea's announcement that it would attend "briefing talks" on 5 March at the UN in New York on the US proposal for 4-party talks, including China, towards "a lasting peace on the divided peninsula".

Twice before Pyongyang has announced its readiness to attend such "briefing talks" and twice it has reneged on its commitment, apparently waiting for promised food and economic assistance from Washington and Seoul to begin flowing down the pipeline.

Madeleine Albright and her South Korean counterpart, Yoo Chong-ha, reaffirmed support for a 1994 agreement under which Washington and Seoul would provide North Korea with $5 billion in light water reactors in return for Pyongyang freezing its nuclear programme. They also pledged $10 million and $6 million each towards a $44.5 million fund the UN's World Food Programme needs to supply North Korea with 100,000 tons of grain in emergency food assistance.

North Korea needs 2.3 million tons of grain this year to offset the impact of poor harvests and disastrous floods in 1995 and 1996. South Korea is not rushing in to help. Yoo said "Pyongyang could expect broad scale support only after engaging in peace talks". He said he was expecting "a major shake-up" in Pyongyang's ruling elite after the recent defection of their leading ideologue, Hwang Jang-yop, *who is holed up in the South Korean mission in Beijing*, the deaths of Defence Minister Choe Kwang and Defence Vice-Minister Kim Kwang-jin, and the replacement of Premier Kong Song-san. The tug of war between the two Koreas is such that some US circles, quoted in *The New York Times*, are accusing Seoul of deliberately fanning tension in the North and hampering US peace efforts.

Replacing her black cowboy hat with a blue baseball cap, the US secretary of state made the ritual pilgrimage to the 4km wide Demilitarised Zone which has divided the Koreas since 1953. She told US and South Korean troops at Guard Post Ouellette that the 5 March "briefing talks" at the UN would launch "the process for peace on the Korean peninsula".

One US official accompanying her was less upbeat. "There is no certainty the North Koreans will attend until they actually show up in New York," he said.

Albright's talks in Japan were even more down to earth, taken up mostly by such bilateral economic and trade issues as market access for US cars and auto parts, paper products and photographic films. Other "key areas" addressed by the secretary of state in talks with Shinzi Sato, the industry and international trade minister, were Japan's "port practices" with the US preparing to slap sanctions on Japanese shipping, and curbs on foreign equity ownership in telecommunications giants NTT and KDD.

On security issues, Ms Albright, reverting to her imperious persona, told Foreign Minister Ikeda and Defence Minister Fumio Kyuma that there would be no cutbacks in US forces in Japan or Asia despite the calls on Okinawa, that "security links were an important basis for the whole bilateral relationship", and that "the US State Department [with her] planned a more active role in ensuring that foreign policy was taken into account when deciding trade issues."

The US currently maintains 100,000 troops in the Asia-Pacific region, half of which are in Japan, the other half in South Korea. Leases or US installations on Okinawa expire in May and some 3,000 landowners are refusing to extend them, citing the negative impact of the US military presence on local life there.

Okinawans complain of noise, accidents and rising crime. The rape of a schoolgirl by three US servicemen in September 1996 has further fueled resentment.

On all these issues, Ms Albright failed to extract more from the Japanese beyond the mere pledge that they will try to live up to the signed agreements and "exchange views".

In China, where she had vowed to raise the human rights issue and "tell it like it is", she uncharacteristically let the post-Deng leadership off the hook by telling the media she "understood" that letting political dissidents out of jail "would be a lengthy process".

No doubt Ms Albright was heeding the Clinton administration's corollary rule that "US-China ties would not be held hostage to the human rights issue".

Other issues like Hong Kong, which reverts to Chinese sovereignty on 30 June at midnight, Taiwan, which is Beijing's next reunification target, Tibet, trade, China's candidacy to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) or Chinese exports of missile, chemical and nuclear technology were hardly broached.

Which is why US diplomats could report that President Jiang was "very positive about Sino-US relations" and that Foreign Minister Qian saw bilateral relations as "constantly moving forward, despite twists and turns over the last 25 years".

Party chief Hu Yaobang's death in 1989 had been the occasion for the Tiananmen uprising in June of that year. The repression that followed soured relations with the US to the point that Warren Christopher's first visit to Beijing, in March 1994, ended in a fiasco because Albright's predecessor decided to lecture the Chinese on human rights.

Christopher returned to Beijing only last November, just before retiring, and devoted himself to mending fences and preparing a resumption of China-US summits. Albright built on that groundwork, ignoring events in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region where Muslim Uygurs are revolting against the Chinese Hans. While she was in Beijing, on the day of Deng's funeral, a bomb blew up in a bus in the town of Ghulje-Yining, killing at least one person and injuring several others.

Albright would not comment. Instead she called China "a key to stability in the next century", reaffirmed US commitment to "our strategic dialogue", said expert level talks on missile, nuclear and chemical issues would begin next month, and announced that Vice-President Al Gore would visit Beijing in March and that a US-China summit would take place by the end of 1998.

In light of such meagre accomplishments, what then was the strategic, global import of the Asian leg of Albright's inaugural world tour? It seems to *have been implicit in the visit itself*, as a message both to Western Europe that beyond NATO, the US was the linchpin of Asian security as well, and to Russia that the US was at work on a new "containment" policy from East Europe to the Far East.

The US proposal for 4-party talks on Korea excludes Russia. With Evgeny Primakov as foreign minister, Russia has been moving closer to China and to its Muslim neighbours to the south, and Albright's visit has shown that the US still wants to wield the "China card" should Russia prove difficult on the enlargement of NATO to Eastern Europe.

Li Peng's recent visit to Moscow went under-reported in the US media, but the significance of bilateral agreements to reduce troops along the Sino-Surrian border and to cooperate in the nuclear field was not lost on political circles in Washington.

To be sure, Madeleine Albright should have included Pakistan on her Asian trip, democracy has been clipped in that country to make way for a Defence and National Security Council, while the Pakistan- (and US-) backed Taliban continue to bleed Afghanistan and destabilise the former Central Asian Soviet republics, the aim being to deny Russia its age-old ambition of gaining access to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean.

But visiting Pakistan would have entailed including India as well, a necessary exercise in Washington's balancing act on South Asia. Besides, New Delhi remains pro-Russia despite the economic liberalisation initiated in 1991. And Ms Albright may have had to visit with the Taliban themselves, described by some commentators as "Islamic students in the line of Washington" — and notorious for their self-righteous and obscurantist belief that "the woman's place is in the home".

# From dialogue to alliance

In this instalment of a series on the Copenhagen Declaration, **Lutfi El-Kholi** explains the thaw in Denmark after the dust of Qana had been swept away

In July 1996, after having excused ourselves from participating in the third round of the Louisiana Initiative, *which was consequently* postponed by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Egyptian participants resumed our discussions with Torbin Breil, Herbert Pundik *and David Kimche*. The three organisers were eager to learn what it would take to put the initiative back on track, particularly given the favourable response it had aroused among European intellectuals and at the level of the European Union.

We told them that, in light of the major developments in the *region since the second* round, the very basis of the talks would have to be modified. We summarised these developments in three points: First, the decision of *Peres' government to subject the Lebanese* people to intensive bombardment for reasons purely related to domestic electoral considerations in Israel had gravely skewed the mechanisms for a peaceful settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Second, *Binyamin Netanyahu had just* been voted into office as prime minister at the head of a Likud government. His and his party's vehement opposition to the terms of reference and rules of the peace process had been made abundantly clear. Third, the Arab summit meeting that had recently been held *in Cairo had* reaffirmed the Arab commitment to a political settlement as a strategic option in spite of the recently elected Israeli government's official stance against the peace process.

These three developments, we stated, indicated that, while the Arab stance toward peace had remained consistently positive, the Israeli side had back-tracked, both at the official level (within the current Likud government and the previous Labour Party government), and at the popular level, *with the election of Netanyahu on the* basis of his explicit opposition to the peace process.

Although our three visitors attempted to phrase these developments in *slightly different* terms, they ultimately agreed with our perspective. In light of these conclusions, we discussed the modifications we believed necessary for the third session of the Louisiana Initiative. The first two sessions, we argued, had accomplished certain important goals. For the *first time, dialogue between Arab and Israeli* intellectuals had been brought out into the open in a responsible manner. The initiative underscored the participants' conviction that a just and comprehensive peace was an historical imperative under current regional and international conditions, and the only alternative to continued warfare and bloodshed. Yet, once these goals had been accomplished, we were left with only two alternatives. Either we could let things rest at the point we had reached in our exchange of views in Louisiana, or we could seek to take these ideas further by translating them into a political, cultural and social movement that would have a positive impact. Now more than ever, we insisted, practical action was imperative before the regional developments reached their logical, disastrous, conclusion. At that point, it *would be impossible, if not ludicrous, for the Arabs alone to remain committed to peace* as their strategic option. The prospects of such a turn of events, particularly if one considers the stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction in the region, *would be too dire to contemplate.*

The three organisers asked us what we proposed. Since the Louisiana Initiative had been so well received in Europe, we suggested inviting European intellectuals and the general public *to participate, with the aim of creating a* tidal wave that would compel the parties involved in the conflict to achieve a comprehensive settlement and a truly equitable peace. This, we suggested, would be accomplished by creating an international alliance *that possessed the features and mechanisms of a* mass movement.

We let matters rest there so that the members of each team could consult with their colleagues. Approximately two weeks later, Pundik contacted us to inform us that, during the next Louisiana dialogue, we would be examining the possibility of founding an international alliance for peace. The meeting would be held in Denmark. We requested that the preparatory session be held *in Cairo. Ultimately Pundik and his colleagues agreed to hold it in* the Danish Embassy in Cairo, the representative of the agency sponsoring the initiative in the name of the European Union. The meeting was scheduled for *20 December 1996, and took* place as planned.

Participants included intellectuals from Egypt, Palestine, Israel and Denmark. The Jordanians did not attend, although they had reaffirmed their commitment to participate in the revamped Louisiana Initiative.

*The participants discussed numerous proposals* and working papers touching on the proposed bases of the international alliance. We decided that each team should hold follow-up meetings in their home countries before we returned to Copenhagen in order to formulate a joint document: the Copenhagen Declaration. A series of *preparatory meetings for this purpose were* scheduled for 28 and 29 January 1997, to be followed by the international conference for the new Louisiana Initiative, which would be held on 30 January 1997 so that the Declaration could be subjected to debate and ratified. Eighty participants were invited to attend. Of these, nine who had originally accepted the invitation declined at the last minute. After the Declaration had been ratified, an open European discussion of the alliance in the Danish parliament *was suggested, to which intellectuals, writers, and politicians of all persuasions would be* invited. These discussions were to benefit from full media coverage.

In the interim, as we had resolved at the Cairo meeting, the Egyptian team convened a series of discussion groups in order to deliberate on the proposals and working papers outlining the substance of the Copenhagen Declaration. Over 60 Egyptian *intellectuals took* part in these discussions. By the time we arrived in Copenhagen, we had a range of proposals regarding the precise nature of the Copenhagen Declaration. *The ideas for the peace alliance fell into five* categories, according to the nationality of their initiators: Danish/European; Israeli; *Jordanian; finally, two Palestinian and Egyptian* proposals. The entire day of 28 January 1997 was given over to meetings among the Arab intellectuals in which they discussed all the proposals. These meetings resulted in a united formula for the draft Copenhagen Declaration, titled the International Alliance for Peace. The next day, the international preparatory committee, comprising all the participants, held two protracted sessions. The outcome was the draft Declaration that would be presented to the following *day's conference as "the international alliance for an Arab-Israeli peace".*

The conference held on 30 January lasted approximately five hours. Much of the time was spent registering the concerns of four of the participants who, in spite of their support of the Declaration as a whole, opposed one or two points. An influential Israeli religious leader objected to the wording of the articles pertaining to the state of Palestine and Jerusalem. Sheikh Mohamed Hamami, the Palestinian Islamic *scholar and founding member of Hamas,* also had reservations concerning the article pertaining to Jerusalem. Dr Jaballah, a resident of Hebron and a member of the central committee of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, voiced concerns over the provisions concerning the Palestinian refugees and the right *of return. This issue, he argued, should be emphasised,* and not simply included among the six important issues to be settled during final status negotiations. Finally, Israeli writer Yael Dayan, Moshe Dayan's daughter, a member of the Israeli Labour Party, a Knesset member and one of the founders of the Peace Now movement, urged her compatriots to summon the courage to support her demand for the immediate dismantling of both old and new settlements on the grounds that this would guarantee both Israeli security *and an Arab-Israeli peace. Despite this intervention, however, she felt* that the wording of the section concerning the cessation of all construction work on new settlements was quite sufficient, and would rally the Israeli people against Netanyahu's policies.

During the open discussions held in the Danish Parliament on 31 January, a number of points gave rise to some controversy between Arab and Israeli intellectuals. Regarding these points, the Arab intellectuals who had participated in the discussions from the podium (Sari Nasiba, Ihsan *Shordom, and myself) collectively adopted the* following positions.

First, contrary to the claims of some of the participants, notably the French, there is no on*going war being waged from Lebanese territory* against Israel. The Lebanese people's resistance of their country's occupation by Israel is entirely legitimate, an internationally conferred right exercised by the French people themselves during the Nazis' occupation of *their* country. It is both erroneous and misleading to confuse war and resistance.

Secondly, we expressed our opposition to all acts of repression and violence, whatever the source, directed against civilians, whether Pal*estinian or Israeli.*

Thirdly, we said, negotiations between Israel and Syria had to be resumed with the ultimate objective of securing complete Israeli evacuation of the Golan Heights in exchange for mutual security arrangements between the two sides and the normalisation of relations.

Fourthly, we expressed our belief that the ultimate realisation of Israeli security in conjunction with the security of the Arab countries, a lasting peace between the Arabs and Israel, and the establishment of *bilateral* and regional cooperative relations, should inevitably rest on the foundation of a Palestinian-Israeli peace and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Finally, we said we continued to differ with the Israeli intellectuals as to the motives and responsibility of the parties to the conflagration of *wars in the region. We therefore included in the* Declaration a provision that reaffirms our determination, jointly and in conjunction with other international forces, to "contend with the true causes of warfare and conflict in the Middle East."

Ultimately, I would argue that the Copenhagen Declaration is not merely a cry in the wilderness, an irrelevant statement made by a group of intellectuals longing for quiet in a war-torn region. Rather — and here is its significance — *it represents the crystalisation of a new cultural* and political reality during a period of transition from periodic, full-scale warfare to a comprehensive peace.

This reality will not yield results, however, unless it is provided with an organisational framework and a mechanism for action. It was therefore decided that five to seven secretaries to the Alliance would be chosen from among international figures influential in Europe, America, Africa and Latin America, and committed to issues related to peace in the contemporary world. A steering committee will also supervise the Alliance's activities, consisting of representatives from the *Arab* and *Israeli* sides. This committee would be open to Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals, in addition to Pundik (representing Denmark), a representative for the EU and one for the US. Finally, the Alliance's international secretariat will temporarily be based in Copenhagen for the first six months. This location will be renewable for another term until a permanent location within the Middle East is selected. The Danish Foreign Ministry has agreed to finance the office of the secretariat throughout *its period in* Copenhagen. At the *same time*, other funds will be sought from various international sources such as the EU, other international organisations that promote peace and *cultural cooperation, and from individuals* and private organisations.

In its first meeting in February 1997, the steering committee undertook to create four basic international working committees. Each of these committees has been assigned a particular area to monitor and study through field research, reports, direct contacts, seminars, and public meetings inside the region and abroad. One of the committees is to monitor the behaviour of the governments involved in the negotiating process, *assess the extent to which they adhere to the* rules and terms of reference, and ascertain that agreements are implemented in word and in spirit. A second committee is to monitor issues related to violence, a third the Israeli settlements, and a fourth regional cooperation within the framework of the peace process, including the concept of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

I anticipate that the Alliance will begin its activities by the end of March. It will be open, *without restriction, to all forces of peace within* the region and abroad, whether individuals, groups or organisations.

The above has been, in brief, the story behind the conceptual and political background of the Louisiana Initiative and the founding of the International Alliance for Arab-Israeli Peace. As it is unprecedented in the history of this conflict and brings into play a new dynamic initiated by a group of intellectuals, criticism is only a natural response.

In my opinion, popular reactions, however impassioned, are nevertheless essential at this juncture in order to keep the Alliance under constant scrutiny. This will contribute to the task of continually assessing the motives, foundations and outlook of an institution which represents a "political-cultural risk", with all the prospects it has *to offer.*

# After war, before peace

Arab weakness is the main cause of the situation in our region today, writes **Taha El-Magdoub**. *If we can no longer resort to force, can we win the fight for peace?*



If Israel, relying on force during the many years of its conflict with the Arabs, has succeeded in scoring numerous *political* and strategic gains, this is not so much due to its military superiority as it is to the weakness of the Arabs themselves.

The reason the Israelis were able to achieve qualitative military superiority was their access to an unrestricted supply of weapons thanks to their alliance with the US. Their success in achieving absolute nuclear supremacy was due to their active role in the 1956 tripartite invasion *of Egypt in 1956, in return for which* France built Israel's first nuclear reactor in the Negev. The Arabs have had no such access to unlimited military support; they lacked the collective will to obtain a nuclear capacity, which could have been a necessary alternative or a last resort, should Israel persist in its refusal to dismantle its nuclear arsenal — the most likely scenario given Israel's unbending insistence on absolute strategic superiority in traditional and non-traditional weapons.

Israel's economic superiority would have been difficult, if not impossible, to achieve without US backing as well. The cornerstone *for Israeli activity in the* region was laid at the international economic conference held in Casablanca in 1994. Since Netanyahu's accession to power, however, economic concerns have taken a back seat as his government stepped up the Zionist "nationalist" enterprise, once again bringing Israeli-Arab relations to the brink of confrontation and the prospect of armed conflict.

While military and economic superiority has *eluded* the Arabs, it is still possible to conduct the Arab-Israeli struggle effectively at the diplomatic level. It is the only area of manoeuverability open to the Arabs, and we will *have no excuse if* we allow it to fail. It is not a realm of activity that requires Herculean effort. But it does demand a sincere determination to serve the Arab nation, a united, free will, a clear vision of our aims and a commitment to rallying every asset at our disposal.

We are engaged in a comprehensive struggle which, under contemporary circumstances, *implies* the necessity of making optimum use of the most appropriate available tools under the given circumstances. For the Arabs, this need not involve recourse to arms. On the contrary, we have other advantages in our favour, notably diplomatic leverage and potential economic clout. In these domains we have the potential to achieve superiority over Israel, but only if we achieve consensus at the level of the Arab nation.

The successful political management of the struggle with Israel is not only within reach, it is our only alternative. Success, however, requires certain skills: level-headed political acumen enabling us to *accurately forecast future developments*, and the ability to calculate precisely how we are to act in light of our current and future interests. The Arabs possess these skills, as well as the means to turn them to their advantage. To do so would require only mutual trust and the genuine desire to cooperate constructively towards the realisation of a just cause.

Political, not military, superiority is therefore the issue. The necessary com*ponents are available,* but are in disarray, which dissipates their potential impact. We must organise ourselves if we are to act with efficacy. Such an achievement *will be fundamental in modifying the* balance of power which is at present so heavily skewed in favour of Israel. Although the adjustment will be only partial, it will put the peace process back on track, rectifying the effect of the current Israeli government's intractable policies. Only once a semblance of balance is restored can we work toward justice, equality and the restitution of usurped rights.

The concepts of struggle in our contemporary world have changed, as have the tools. The inclination to avoid military solutions has become characteristic of international relations, indeed a funda*mental demand of the international com*munity, now convinced more than ever that the use of force is no longer the appropriate means to resolve chronic international conflicts. If stability and security are to be sustained, only peaceful means of conflict resolution can be employed. The belief that it is possible to achieve security through the exercise of military force alone is incompatible with the times and the nature of the struggle. Usurped *rights and territories will only be returned* through a comprehensive strategy. If the Arabs manage to close ranks within the context of Arab cooperation, they will have found an effective vehicle by which to accomplish their objectives.

A clear sense of direction is essential in this respect. We *must avoid succumbing* to Zionist terms of reference that encourage Arab despair and apathy. Under no circumstances should we believe that the Zionist "national" enterprise is on the verge of becoming a fait accompli. The Zionists might promote this idea, but only at the cost of *deferring hopes for develop*ment and stability. Still, this appears to be the scenario Netanyahu has in mind in his bid to create a climate he sees as favourable to carrying through the new phase of Zionist expansionism he has inaugurated. It is a trend the Arab governments must confront with resolution, skill and concerted effort. They might also consider countering Netanyahu's provocative policies with his own brand of brinkmanship.

History, it seems, has come full circle from the period *between 1967 and 1973*, when even the international community was sensitive to the fact that the Arabs would have to take some form of concerted action after all available means of reaching a peaceful settlement had proved futile. At that juncture, military action offered the only solution. Now, several decades later, we have another solution: in short, to wage a well thought-out, sustained political war through all diplomatic *and media channels*, capitalising on all the assets at our disposal. We are in a strong position to influence international public opinion which, now more than ever, is aware and apprehensive of Israeli intransigence, described by some political commentators as "political madness."

The Arabs have spared no efforts in their quest for a just peace. They are united in their choice of peace as a strategic option and their policies have never deviated from this decision. Israel, on the other hand, appears to have done everything in its power to derail the peace process — indeed, to destroy everything that has been accomplished until now. With a modicum of coordination, the Arabs can initiate a powerful campaign against Israeli intransigence and the destructive be*haviour of the current Likud government.*

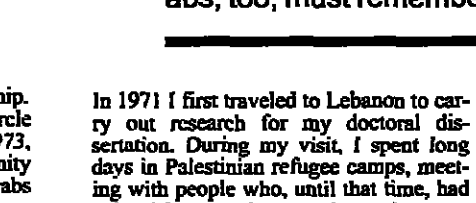
In this context, the European stance is crucial. Europe is eager to play a more active role in the peace process, one commensurate to the vital interests European countries have in the region. It is imperative that the Arabs encourage a greater European contribution and rally European support for the Arab negotiating position. The same applies to Russia, which is in a position to make a more positive contribu*tion to the situation in the region.* Nor should we ignore the crucial developments in US public opinion, which is at the juncture of a new phase in its attitude toward Israeli intransigence, as epitomised by the document drawn up by a group of senior government officials, crit*icising current Israeli policies*, condemning the expansion of Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories and deploring the plans to Judaise Jerusalem.

As the Arabs step up the political confrontation in their drive for a just peace, they should remain aware that numerous diplomatic and economic stakes are involved. Careful coordination is essential at every level of analysis and planning if we are to rally support for our campaign and compel Israel to submit to the international will for peace.

*The writer is a former Egyptian ambassador and Al-Ahram's advisor on Strategic Affairs*

# Crimes to be remembered

*In Bosnia and South Africa, fragmented nations are slowly patched together; and if Arabs and Israelis are ever to achieve reconciliation, writes* **James Zogby**, *the Arabs, too, must remember the horrors we have endured*



In 1971 I first traveled to Lebanon to carry out research for my doctoral dissertation. During my visit, I spent long days in Palestinian refugee camps, meeting with people who, until that time, had existed for me only as an abstraction.

For hours I catalogued stories and recorded vignettes of my visit. I heard powerful testimonies of the expulsions of 1948. Families showed me photographs of lost homes and loved ones and other treasures that had survived *their flight* into exile.

Five years later, I founded the Palestine Human Rights Campaign. I worked closely with Felicia Langer and Israel Shahak, two legendary Israeli human rights activists. Our efforts exposed Israeli violations of Palestinian rights previously unknown in the US: systematic torture of prisoners, cruel acts of humiliation designed to degrade Palestinian leaders, forced expulsions, demolition of homes and villages, expropriation of lands and destruction of orchards, arbitrary mass arrests, and harsh acts of collective punishment against entire communities.

There were many other outrages: the deliberate shooting down of a Libyan airline, killing all 73 passengers, the bombing of an Egyptian primary school, the repeated *mass bombings*, then invasion and occupation, of the south of Lebanon. There are others, too numerous to mention.

In 1981, Fakhani neighbourhood in Beirut was bombed, *killing over 380* Lebanese and Palestinian civilians. This was followed by the "bitter year of 1982."

1982 witnessed both the "iron fist" in the West Bank and Gaza, and the Israeli onslaught against Lebanon culminating in the effort to strangle and destroy the infrastructure of West Beirut. Finally the devastated city was entered and pillaged, and its inhabitants brutalised. From then, it was but a half decade to the Intifada *with its "broken bones" and mass arrests*, and then the beginning of peace talks.

Three years into peace, the refugees in Lebanon still sit in wretched exile. Lebanon is still occupied and periodically brutalised; in the West Bank and Gaza confiscation, settlement building, and now economic *strangulation* are *still routine*.

I remind you of these horrors not to argue against the peace process, but to highlight one of its missing dimensions. It is central to the success of these negotiations that we remember the horrors inflicted on so many Palestinians, Lebanese, Jordanians, Syrians, and Egyptians. Abstract formulas can be negotiated and agreements can be signed. But at the end of the day, for peace to be real, the personal pain of individuals must be addressed.

Palestinian suffering, the devastation of Lebanon — Arab pain — must be on the negotiating table, must be taken into account in the process. The Israelis cannot have the monopoly on suffering; they are not the only ones allowed to negotiate from atop the accumulated suffering of their people.

Israelis collected reparations from Germany; now the World Jewish Congress is demanding the restoration of Jewish gold from Swiss banks. In Poland, Jews will now be able to reclaim land confiscated from them during World War II. In Bosnia, there is a war crimes tribunal; in South Africa, a commission for truth and reconciliation meets to hold accountable those who committed atrocities under apartheid. The US demands and obtains sanctions against Libya and passes legislation threatening to punish any country that does business with Cuba on the grounds that property belonging to Americans of Cuban descent was confiscated illegally by the Castro government.

All these actions are deemed justified on the basis of past suffering and the demand that someone be held accountable for unjust deeds. For reconciliation to be possible, however, it is not always necessary that individuals be punished. The South African model, for example, requires only that the guilty be identified and ask forgiveness.

But if there is no remorse — and this is the troubling reality in the Arab relationship with *Israel — if there is* no acknowledgment that wrongs were committed, then how in the end can there be reconciliation?

There is asymmetry in the Arab-Israeli relationship. Israel has greater military power and, given the support of the US, greater political clout. But Israel also wrongly assumes that it has greater moral power in that it negotiates as the sole victim seeking assurance and security. It is *unconscionable that the Arab world* has not made a substantial effort to challenge this Israeli view.

There must be peace; peace can only be based on negotiations. But negotiations must be based on mutual respect and reciprocity.

Arabs *must* acknowledge the *pain* and insecurity of Israelis, especially that for which they are directly responsible. Arabs must simultaneously demand that Israel and individual Israelis recognise their responsibility for the Arab suffering they have caused.

*It is fascinating to observe Israelis* speak of the tragedies that have befallen them: they give specifics, names and faces. They know the names of those who were blown up in the bus in Tel Aviv, those who were killed in Ma'alot or Munich. There is even a memorial in a Jewish settlement in Hebron with the pictures of the Jews who were killed in that city in 1929.

But who among the Arabs, except for the families directly affected, remembers even one name, or the face of an Arab murdered by the Israelis?

If Arabs do not demand remembrance and accountability, then who will? The faces of families who lost loved ones in Fakhari, in Sabra and Shatila, in the Ibrahimi Mosque and in Qana (and all the *others before and after), the prisoners* who were sexually and physically abused, or the families exiled, robbed of their land, and thrown out of their burning homes — all those *humiliated*, tortured and killed: their faces should be before us always.

They, in a real sense, ought to be our strength. It is to them that we must respond and by them that we will be held accountable.

I do not recommend that we wallow in the past or create a religion of our traumas. But how can we move forward if we do not remember their pain and seek, on their behalf, to redress these wrongs?

If Cuban, Bosnian, South African, and Jewish lives and suffering matter enough to be remembered, then Arab lives must *matter as well.*

The Israelis cannot be allowed to do what they did after the recent revelations that Egyptian prisoners of war were massacred and thrown in mass graves following the 1973 War. Their argument that to raise such an issue was contrary to peace is unacceptable on moral, legal, and political grounds.

If we are to lead our people into peace and reconciliation, we must know that our constituency is in pain. To ignore this reality does an injustice to the memories of those who suffered and those who still carry their suffering. To ignore this reality *gives the Israelis a false sense of peace* — as if only their suffering is real and there is no one to hold them accountable for the atrocities they have committed.

This was meant, in part, as an answer to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, who asked, during his recent visit to Washington, why so many *Arabs still held* Israel to be an enemy. He called on Arab leaders to launch a re-education programme to teach acceptance of Israel and reconciliation.

I agree with the Netanyahu that reconciliation is essential for peace, but without an acknowledgment of injustices and a commitment to end the suffering, his call, tragically, is a hollow one.

*The writer is president of the Washington-based Arab-American Institute.*

Al-Ahram Weekly

# Nix, nyet, no, nein

Immediately before his arrival in Cairo, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu announced the closure of four Palestinian offices in east Jerusalem which he alleges are Palestinian Authority branches operating within the city, in violation of the Oslo Accords. He also announced that the plan to construct the Har Homa settlements would continue as planned. That these settlements are also in violation of the Oslo agreements seems, at best, to be an inconsequential point when pitted against the political backlash Netanyahu would endure for asserting that this agreement is binding for both parties.

Similarly, he announced that the Israeli troop withdrawal from the occupied West Bank would continue, as planned. However, the PA should not be so foolish as to believe that the size of the transfer will be anywhere near what they expected. The reasons, again, are the contorted dynamics of Israeli internal politics. Should Netanyahu agree to hand over land in Section C, which accounts for nearly 70 per cent of the occupied West Bank territory, he stands to lose the support of 12 key coalition members. And, simply stated, the possibility of his forming a national unity government now, in light of the recent scandals, seems slim to none, meaning that he will likely continue to be the puppet of the Israeli far-right.

Despite these strident moves to force Israeli policy down the throats of the Palestinians, Netanyahu still believes that he is moving steadily along the road to peace. Such optimism is indeed laudable, given that his actions, which Clinton recently noted merely serve to "build distrust", have been matched in short-sightedness by his declarations that there will be no Palestinian state, no right of return for refugees, no division of Jerusalem and no return of all the occupied lands. To his list of "nos", which is proof enough that he cares not one iota for the principles of Oslo, one more can be added: no to a comprehensive peace and regional stability.

On what grounds would this peace be laid when Netanyahu obviously holds the concept of trust and equality in equal contempt and distaste as he views the rights of his Arab neighbours.

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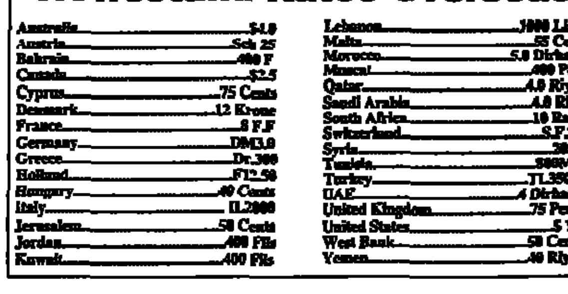
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# Strategic overlaps

Shared concerns over maintaining regional stability outweigh inevitable differences in US-Egyptian relations, writes **Ibrahim Nafie**



Any discussion of the overlaps and differences in American and Egyptian policy aims must address issues connected to regional stability, a strategic objective of both countries. Certainly, the degree of cooperation that both countries exercise towards this end is a sure indicator of the strength, or otherwise, of their relationship.

It is only to be expected that the US, the world's major power with wide-ranging economic and strategic interests, would have its own view of the best ways of maintaining international security. Likewise Egypt, a pivotal regional power, has a view of its own role in maintaining regional stability. And the greater the overlap between the two countries' perceptions of stability, then the greater the possibility of strengthening their relationship.

From the fifties to the early seventies US-Egyptian relations were marked by swings between tension and animosity and détente and rapprochement. Indeed, it was only in the aftermath of the 1973 war that relations assumed a more solid footing as the US came to realise that Egypt was fundamental to the preservation of peace in the Middle East.

It is from the late 1980s, when US military academies opened their doors to Egyptian cadets and American military assistance to Egypt became a permanent feature of bilateral relations, that we can date the beginning of US-Egyptian strategic cooperation.

That cooperation has taken many forms, not least the provision of military aid, which has reached more than $1 billion annually, together with the supply a military hardware, including M-60 tanks, armoured personnel carriers, military transport vehicles, anti-tank missiles and F16 fighter planes.

The fact that this support has been of great importance in strengthening Egypt's military hand notwithstanding, Egypt has always made clear its determination to diversify its military suppliers in order to safeguard its autonomy and ensure that it has access to the best and most up-to-date military technology.

Washington's military aid, it is important to note, has never been conditional upon the signing of peace treaties. Nor was it ever expected that such aid would continue in perpetuity. Indeed, the Egyptian government has always been conscious of the need, in its long term planning, to reduce its dependency on US military aid.

Egyptian policy has been consistent in its attempts to maximise the efficacy of the military in confronting any threat to national security, both now, at a difficult stage in the peace process, and in the future, should that process lead to a lasting, comprehensive peace.

Last year's Badr manoeuvres illustrated the success of current military policy and the development and streamlining of its capabilities.

If Badr 96 illustrated the independent capabilities of Egypt's armed forces, joint training manoeuvres with the US, such as the operations code-named Shining Star and Iron Cobra, have proved instrumental in honing the kind of close military coordination that proved so decisive in the liberation of Kuwait. Such manoeuvres, which began in 1983, have been a regular feature of the training of the Egyptian military, and serve to underline the continuity of this form of strategic cooperation.

Unfortunately, in the field of arms manufacture, levels of cooperation are not as high as they might be. Until now Egypt is licensed to assemble only the Abrams M1-A1 advanced tank under the terms of the memorandum of understanding signed in 1988, and to service US manufactured M-60A3 and M-60A1 tanks and some categories of military transport vehicles.

Military cooperation, then, is not as fully developed across the board as one might expect to be the case given the many overlaps in security aims. Both Cairo and Washington share concerns over international terrorism and the countries that support it, and both are committed to the reduction of weapons of mass destruction. This said, there are too matters of difference regarding the solution of specific security problems and towards defence arrangements.

Egypt has consistently expressed its belief that regional security initiatives will only succeed if they take on board the specific needs and circumstances of the peoples of the region, which necessarily implies an Arab framework for security arrangements. The US, for its part, appears determined on maintaining a presence within regional security arrangements, subdividing the region into strategic areas such as the Gulf, in which it wishes to maintain a strong presence. Vis-a-vis the Arab-Israeli conflict, Washington appears intent on promoting a regional alliance between Israel, Turkey and Jordan in the hope that Egypt might join at some later stage. Committed to an Arab security mechanism, which reflects more accurately the spirit of the region and seems to provide the most likely possibility of ensuring peace and security, Egypt rejects such a configuration.

Other sensitive areas of the relationship, raised by President Mubarak in Washington, include divergent approaches to strategies to reduce weapons of mass destruction in the region. Egypt, naturally, objects to the Israeli monopoly on nuclear arms and maintains that its signing of the convention banning chemical weapons must be linked to Isreali agreement to abide by the stipulations of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and a clear timetable for the fulfillment of the Egyptian initiative to free the region of all weapons of mass destruction. The US, though, appears determined to deal with the two treaties separately, and to continue to condone Israel's refusal to sign the NPT.

In addition, despite US attempts to resuscitate meetings of the disarmament committee within the framework of multi-lateral negotiations over regional security arrangements, Egypt insists on remaining open-minded to other approaches, such as those forwarded by France, particularly if they aim at placing Israel's nuclear arsenal under international scrutiny.

That US-Egyptian relations should encompass such differences is perfectly natural. Continuous dialogue and discussion, aimed at furthering the understanding of one another's positions is, after all, an intrinsic feature of this unique relationship.

# Democratic secular state revisited

**Mohamed Sid-Ahmed** calls on Arab intellectuals to probe the possibility of going beyond the two-state solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict by revitalising the idea of a one-state solution

In the context of the ongoing debate over the Copenhagen meeting, I will try here to clarify why I attach so much importance to distinguishing between intellectuals and negotiators, why I assume that intellectuals have an independent role to play, and why I believe they must operate only in the open.

Whether they like it or not, negotiators are conditioned by the balance of power between the protagonists. They can find themselves forced to resort to any means, legitimate or otherwise, to reach their ends, which is not the case with intellectuals, whose stock in trade is integrity, equity, and a flawless logic. Moreover, the intellectual tries not to be hostage to the balance of power. His task is to develop a panoramic view of the conflict, to not allow the forest to be hidden by the trees.

Visualising the conflict as a totality also means being able to see the viewpoint of the adversary, which entails regarding the adversary as a *subject* and not merely an *object* of history. To that end, the temptation to demonise the enemy must be resisted, as must the tendency to limit one's constituency to those in one's own ranks who go along with the peace process. In fact, the circle of interlocutors must extend to include the viewpoint of those who oppose it as well.

Netanyahu represents the 50 per cent of Israelis who opposed the peace line defined by Rabin and Peres. After he defeated Peres at the polls, Netanyahu's tacit message to the Arab parties was that although he was offering less than Peres, he could deliver on his promises while Peres could not, for the simple reason that no one could accuse the Likud leader of being soft when it came to defending Israeli rights.

Today Netanyahu's stand can be summarised as advocating the exchange of peace for peace, rather than of land for peace, which is the formula currently accepted by all the other protagonists. Netanyahu believes that, just as he himself places Israel's security requirements before peace, Arab leaders too place the security of their regimes before the restoration of occupied territories, and that, accordingly, a 'security versus security' tradeoff can be worked out between Israel and those Arab leaders. In exchange for providing Arab regimes with security, whether in the form of police security with the help of the Mossad, or economic security by facilitating their access to the new globalised economy, Israel would retain the Arab territories it occupies, no longer as a bargaining chip with which to wring concessions from the Arabs, but as a commission willingly given for its services! That is what Netanyahu means by 'peace-for-peace'.

In the event, Netanyahu is adamant on the question of not returning the Occupied Territories to the Arabs, which implicitly means that he categorically rejects the idea of a two-state solution. The Arabs too can put forward their own version of a one-state solution, namely, the establishment of a democratic secular state in Palestine that would include all the present inhabitants of historical Palestine, whether Jews, Muslims or Christians. Here intellectuals can play the important role of probing options for a peaceful solution other than the partition of Palestine into two states. In a balance of power tilted less sharply to Israel's advantage than at present, a democratic secular Palestine could turn out to be a more viable solution to the intractable Arab-Israeli conflict than any put forward so far.

The Arabs believed that the line adopted by Rabin and Peres was heading towards a two-state solution, but Rabin was assassinated and Peres was defeated at the polls. In actual fact, however, neither man ever committed himself to accepting the establishment of a Palestinian state, nor did either ever relinquish the idea that Israel had to retain military superiority over all the Arab states taken together, as well as exclusive sovereignty over Jerusalem. With Netanyahu uncompromising on the one-state solution, the only Arab response commensurate with the challenge is to insist on a solution based on a democratic unified state, provided it is secular, not Zionist. This idea is still supported by radical trends in the Arab world who are branded as enemies of peace because they oppose the abortive Peres/Rabin version of a two state-solution.

Skeptics can point to the fact that the idea of a democratic secular state in Palestine is not new. Arafat first raised the slogan in the aftermath of the '67 war, but was soon forced to abandon it. However, conditions then were totally different from what they are today. The slogan, which called for the establishment of a secular state in place of Israel, was interpreted at the time as a disguised call for the destruction of the state of Israel, an aim enshrined in the Palestinian National Charter. Today, the charter has been abrogated. The state of guerilla warfare has been replaced by peace negotiations, and Arafat is at the head of a Palestinian Authority negotiating with whichever Israeli government happens to be in power, however hawkish it may be.

Israel will obviously not object to the idea of a democratic state. Rather, its objection will focus on the idea of replacing the Zionist state by a secular one. But this can eventually be the subject of a fascinating intellectual debate. To begin with, no ideology is immutable, as borne out by the communist experience. See how different Stalin's communism was from Mao's, Deng's, Guevara's, Berlinguer's, Pol Pot's, etc. That is not to say, however, that Israel can be expected to openly relinquish Zionism in any foreseeable future. Indeed, even if it should come to see that its interest would be better served if it introduced radical changes to Zionism, it would never admit to abandoning it as an ideology, but would introduce such changes in the name of Zionism. As far as the Arabs are concerned, Zionism will continue to be rejected out of hand as long as it is used by Israel to justify its aggression against legitimate Arab rights. What the word could represent to the Jews in terms of their legitimate identity problems is of no concern to the Arabs. With both ideologies now celebrating their centenaries, the time is propitious for a debate on what Zionism, and possibly also what pan-Arabism, should stand for in a climate of peace.

Once the debate is over, the implementation of a one-state solution acceptable to the Arabs need no longer be out of reach. One possible scenario would be to establish a Palestinian state first, then have the two states merge into one. Constitutional guarantees could go far in dissipating whatever legitimate fears the two peoples still harbour. It should be noted that the idea of coexistence in the context of one state is incompatible with the idea of boycotting all Israelis indefinitely. But a debate that will perforce touch on the very essence of the conflict cannot be undertaken by negotiators. Only independent intellectuals are qualified to engage in such a fundamental debate, provided, of course, that it is conducted in complete transparency and openness.

# No peace at all

**By Naguib Mahfouz**



No two Arabs disagree on the issue of Jerusalem: the building of settlements is destructive to peace and an obstacle in the path of a peaceful agreement. Whoever supports the construction of these settlements is an enemy of peace, and antagonises not only the Arabs but the whole world. To this day, the international community does not recognise Israel's occupation of east Jerusalem, which is indisputably Arab land. The only nation to have expressed any intention to transfer its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem is the United States, and even that nation has reiterated that the move does not conflict with the status of Jerusalem, nor does it signify recognition of Israel's presence in east Jerusalem. How, then, can Israel so blatantly mock the consensus of the international community?

In recent years, Israel has stuck to the position that Jerusalem should be the subject of independent negotiations; current Israeli policy, therefore, represents a complete reversal of the stand taken by previous Israeli governments, and its attack on Jerusalem is an insult to the entire peace process and to the sentiments of all those who believe in God.

Strangely, the Israeli council of ministers has approved this situation; for his part, the mayor of Jerusalem has threatened the Palestinians, which is not very encouraging. Is Israel attempting to set the terms of war?

There are two kinds of peace: one is achieved by agreement and is lasting, while the second is imposed through enforced consent, which of course is only temporary, as Bismarck's peace with France clearly showed. The second kind of peace is not peace at all, but an invitation to war. Is this the peace proposed by Netanyahu?

*Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmawy.*

## The Press This Week

# Time bomb

**Al-Ahali:** "The Hebron accord was not, as the US president claims, a turning point in Netanyahu's position. Instead, it was a continuation of his previous policy in a way which would relieve him of external and internal pressures due to his actions undermining the peace process. If there has been any change whatsoever in Netanyahu's position, it is that he now feels more confident that the forces opposing him have weakened and that he is now in a position to go on the offensive and break into strongholds which had hitherto been beyond his reach."
*(Mohamed Sid-Ahmed, 26 February)*

**Al-Gomhuria:** "Will the advocates of peace leave the door open for extremists to wreck the prospects of peace! To this we can say 'no', not only in light of the US commitment to enforce the Israeli-Arab accords in full, but also in light of European efforts to restart multilateral talks and shuttle between Syria and Israel for a comprehensive peace. Secure borders will ensure that a new war in the region does not erupt."
*(Editorial, 28 February)*

**Al-Wafd:** "Bulldozers are preparing to level Arab land in Jerusalem, while Israeli tanks stand ready to quell any Palestinian protest or uprising. Syria has declared that this settlement in Jerusalem is tantamount to a declaration of war; Jordan's Crown Prince has cancelled his visit to Israel; the US has advised Arafat to exercise self-control; Arab delegations have demanded a meeting of the UN Security Council to formulate a resolution which the US will not reject. The scenario will end with the settlement sealed and a Jewish quarter established on Arab land. If the Jerusalem issue should subsequently be discussed, the Arabs will find nothing to negotiate about ... let alone a place to sit!"
*(Gamal Badawi, 28 February)*

**Al-Ahram:** "Nothing is more dangerous to the peace process than the settlement project which Israel is adamant about enforcing regardless of all previous agreements. The danger lies not only in undermining confidence in the negotiations, but in creating a new status quo which changes the topography of the Arab world. It is a usurpation of Arab rights and a provocation which could lead to violence between Palestinians and Israelis. The dangerous consequences of such expansion in settlements puts the whole peace process in jeopardy."
*(Editorial, 1 March)*

**October:** "Israel's settlements policy is not only the Likud government's or Netanyahu's particular policy. It is a general Israeli policy initiated by the Labour Party, which is determined to rid the Holy City of its inhabitants and seize large tracts of it so that when it is time for the final stage of the negotiations, there will be no Jerusalemites and no land belonging to them."
*(Mariam Rubin, 2 March)*

**Al-Akhbar:** "The Israeli government is mistaken if it believes that Judaising Jerusalem and building new settlements on occupied Arab lands is an irreversible fait accompli. Jerusalem is a time bomb and bringing about changes in it can lead to an explosion of the situation and renewed violence — the acts of violence which accompanied the opening of the Al-Aqsa Mosque tunnel are not all that distant."
*(Said Sonbol, 2 March)*

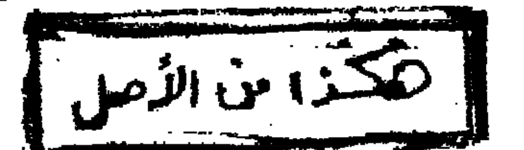
**Rose El-Youssef:** "While news of the peace talks remains as icy as the North Pole, news of Israel's settlement activities in Jerusalem is a roaring fire. Why this [Arab] haste when peace is ensconced in the Israeli Likud freezer? Why do we not wait and plan? What we are seeing today is a mixture of actions by amateurs and professionals, and if we understand this there is nothing wrong with a dialogue. A just peace is on the way. Nations cannot continue to exist by accepting aggressive, expansionist policies which are adopted by megalomaniac Likud generals and rabbis!"
*(Fathi Ghanem, 3 March)*

**Al-Arabi:** "The Palestinian Intifada is sure to come — this time with arms, whether Arafat likes it or not. Nobody can predict the heights to which the Arab-Israeli struggle over Jerusalem will soar. For the Palestinians Jerusalem is symbolic of the whole Middle East conflict. And Israeli intransigence over it is the key to the Knesset and Israel's leadership!"
*(Hisham Fouad, 3 March)*

*Compiled by* **Hala Saqr**




**In depicting Pakistan's newly elected prime minister Nawaz Sharif, I began with the circles of his cheeks. The arm raised in salute to his supporters and the questioning look in his eyes, betray not only the jubilation of victory but concern over the future.**



هكذا من الأصل



## Close up

Salama A. Salama

# Masks of deceit

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu considers his government's decision to build new settlements in East Jerusalem a triumph in the battle for Jerusalem. He and his predecessors have reiterated that the city will remain the united capital of Israel.

There is nothing to prevent Netanyahu from achieving his goal as long as the Arabs seek peace at any price, even at the risk of losing Jerusalem forever. Netanyahu is a master of hypocrisy, knowing that, at most, his knuckles will be lightly rapped. US reactions never go beyond a mild statement, and the Europeans have only expressed anxiety over the future of the peace process. As for the Arabs, they have made increasingly strident declarations. President Arafat went no further, trapped as he was between the Israeli troops in the West Bank and Gaza, ready to block any Palestinian reactions, and his upcoming meeting with President Clinton, after US warnings that violence was not an option.

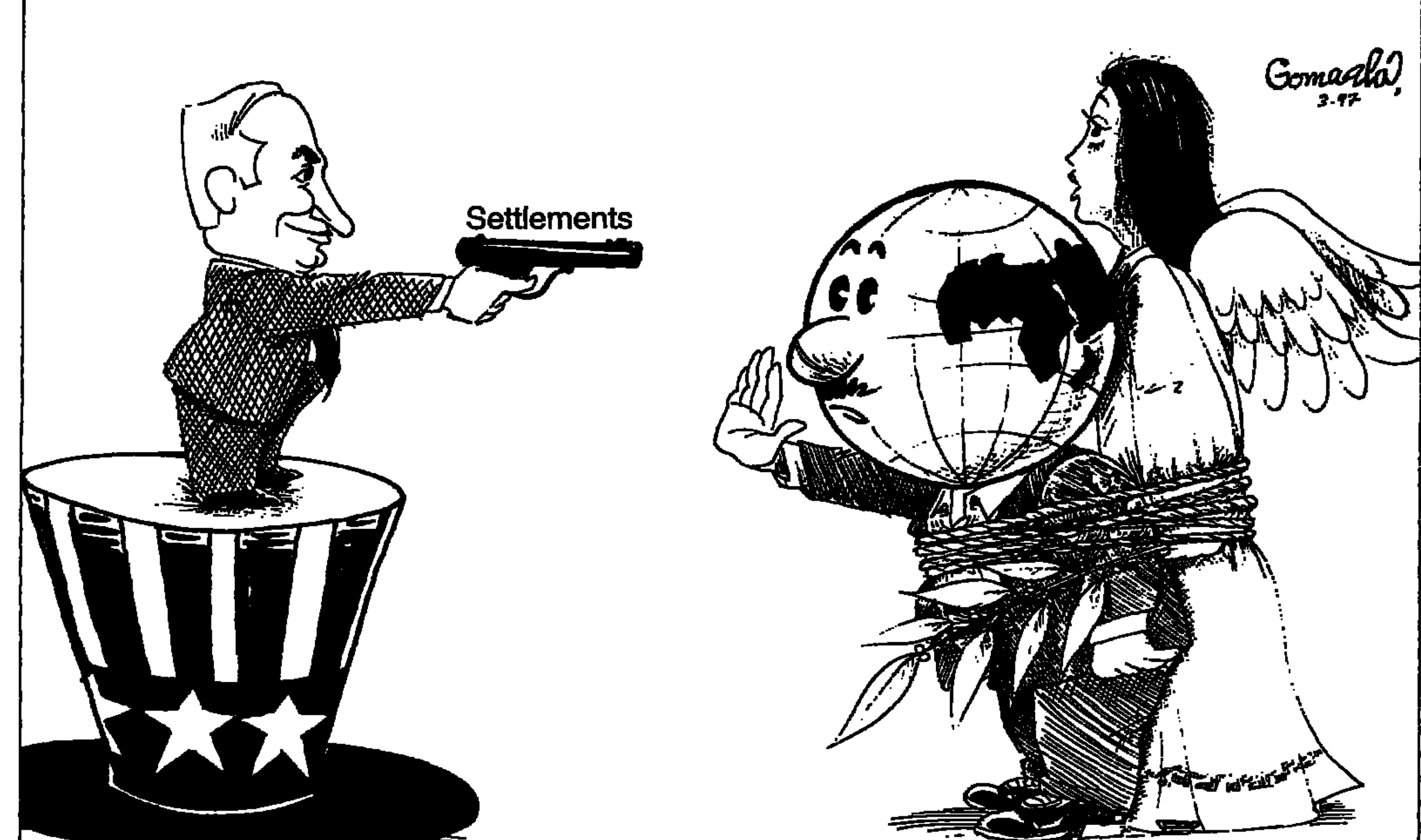
Netanyahu's talks with his American friends yield very predictable results; and the mask he wears for the rest of the world deceives no one. He claimed that the plan to build 6,500 houses for Jewish settlers on the hill of Abu Ghneim, confiscated from the Palestinians in '49, would be offset by the construction of 3,500 housing units for Palestinians in various areas beyond the East Jerusalem cordon. The Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, however, gave Netanyahu the lie by denying that any decrees or funds had been allocated for building homes for Arabs. It appeared that no previous decisions to build Palestinian homes have ever been implemented. Between 1967 and today, only 900 housing units have been built for Palestinians, in contrast with the 64,000 Israeli homes, most of which are built on confiscated Arab land in Jerusalem. Western diplomats declare that the Israeli minister of interior is about to take a number of measures which will deprive a large number of Palestinians of their right to live in Jerusalem, thereby definitively padlocking it as the permanent capital of Israel.

Netanyahu, nevertheless, attempted to put on a different mask while in Jordan during his meeting with King Hussein, only hours after issuing a decree for the construction of the new settlement, intended to separate the southern part of the West Bank from its northern section. With a cynical smirk, he announced that the creation of new settlements did not conflict with the Oslo Agreement and would not affect the peace process. He added that links between Israel and Jordan were strong and there was nothing to spoil the relationship, as Israel was keen to maintain Jordan's security and stability. The Jordanian Crown Prince, however, had no choice but to cancel a planned visit to Israel after the announcement of the intended creation of the settlement.

Another of Netanyahu's masks was uncovered before his visit to Cairo for discussions with President Mubarak, when his visit was made superfluous by Cairo's condemnation of Israeli policy, which is in contradiction with the principles of peace and will certainly disrupt discussions of the future of Jerusalem, an issue that was reserved for final status negotiations by mutual agreement.

Clearly, Netanyahu is trying to benefit from the Clinton-Mubarak summit to show the outside world that he is on good terms with Arab leaders, that the appropriation of Jerusalem to build Israeli settlements hardly affected the Arabs, and therefore, that there was no reason to fear for the peace process.

Among the Arab countries, Egypt is probably most aware of its responsibilities with regard to continuous Israeli procrastination, manipulation of the cornerstones of peace, and repeated attempts to rob the Palestinians of all their rights. It is highly likely, therefore, that the settlements will be at the top of the agenda when Mubarak meets Clinton, though nobody expects the US to criticise Israel as long as the Arabs do not make a united, decisive stand on this issue. If the Arabs lose Jerusalem, the only portion of the Palestinian tragedy which could have been salvaged will be reduced to crumbs and insignificant details.




## Soapbox

### Intellectual categories

The attitudes of intellectuals to the challenges facing Egyptian and Arab society have been extensively discussed lately. Two major categories of intellectuals exist. Independent intellectuals who identify with the problems of oppressed and vulnerable groups in society. Intellectuals in this group fight for the liberation of their country through the political, economic and cultural emancipation of the most vulnerable sectors of society.

The liberation of the nation is the social liberation of the oppressed, an integral part of national sovereignty, which becomes meaningless as long as sectors of the population suffer political injustice. An independent intellectual of this kind is opposed to the domination of patriarchal ideas and advocates the involvement of the weak in decisions which affect their own fate.

Members of this category also identify with specific issues at some stage of their lives. Harsh experiences, however — imprisonment, dismissal from work or police harassment — push them back into their own cocoon of individual and class interests. Intellectual "opportunists", who use their intellectual capital to forward themselves and serve their narrow interests rather than the public good, are rife in this category. They will raise any banner to hoist themselves up: revolution, radicalism, religion or the oppressed.

The two categories of intellectuals have widely different interests. The first seek to involve the oppressed actively in the development of the nation. The second, on the other hand, are always ready to sing the praises of economic, political or cultural officials. The crumbs of power are their highest aspiration, and their dearest possession.



Awatef Abdel-Rahman

*This week's speaker is professor of mass communications at Cairo University.*

# Too long in the tooth

*Zionism is well past its sell-by date, writes* **Gamil Matar**; *it is time for Arabs and Jews to cast it aside*

Yet again, advocates of Israel's version of peace are baffled. Every time Israel attacks Arab land or the Palestinian people, it becomes clearer that Israel needs Arab allies to speak for it. They must not protest when Israel violates Arab rights, or reneges on commitments. If they do complain, however, they should attempt to sound like US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns, who most recently said the US government would have preferred it had the Israeli government not decided to build a new settlement on Arab land just outside East Jerusalem. When the sole superpower, co-sponsor of the Middle East peace process, dispenser of aid and weapons, protests, that is what is sounds like. Other Western countries have not been firmer in their protests. Even the allies of Israel's version of peace in the Arab world, officials and intellectuals alike, only differed from their Western counterparts in style, not in essence.

I do not want to believe that a senior Palestinian Authority (PA) official has struck a deal with a senior Israeli political leader. Rumour has it that the deal entails an exchange of land between the PA and the Israeli government. In other words, it is the sort of deal negotiators reach to sidestep a predicament — in this case, the need to avoid Palestinian and Arab outrage over the building of new Israeli settlements in Greater Jerusalem, in exchange for more extensive and expeditious Israeli redeployment in the West Bank. The real meaning behind such rumours, if they are founded, is that the Israeli version of peace is taking shape, under the Netanyahu government, in a swifter, more assertive manner than previously. Events leading up to the Hebron Protocol — the Israelis stonewalling until the deal was signed — are further proof that the Israeli version of peace reigns supreme at this stage. Consequently, when we refer to the current peace process, we must remember that we are, in fact, referring to the Israeli version of peace — not a peace built on trust and rights. Most peace process commentators, however, including most politicians (Arabs and non-Arabs alike) who issue statements confirming their commitment to the peace process, fail to alert the public to this fact. They refuse to admit that the process to which they refer is merely a series of measures and interests which Israel regards as reality on the ground, issues to be discussed over the negotiating table or with US administration officials. Israel expects that the Arabs consent without having been consulted. It is only natural therefore, that Netanyahu should ridicule Arab people and leaders alike. He has repeatedly said that "they" (the Arabs) only understand the language of force, and that force is employed in order to impose the fait accompli. A case in point is the settlement policy he has adopted during the past few months. Netanyahu counted on the Palestinian negotiators' reluctance to encourage a popular Palestinian rebellion.

At this point, all Arab parties should stop striking deals with Israel and refrain from establishing alliances of peace or war. The headlong rush towards peace with Israel should be replaced with political and intellectual uprisings aimed at changing the course of the peace process and purifying the concept of peace. For one thing, we must deal with the settlements in a different way. I expected that the seminar on terrorism held in Cairo recently would reach a resolution describing the confiscation of Arab land, the expulsion of residents, including Bedouins, and building housing units for Americans or Russians on Arab land, as terrorist activities. This land is owned and inhabited by innocent civilians. Confiscations, expulsions and the measures adopted to protect the Israeli army, border checkpoints and the police are proof that building settlements, in this case, is nothing more than terrorism.

If the real or imaginary deals come to a halt, the settlements will probably lead to an explosion threatening security and peace. Israeli policy clearly violates international agreements such as the Geneva Convention, international resolutions and recent agreements signed between the PA and Israel, on which the ink has not yet dried.

The "intellectual uprising" we need must directly address Zionism as the source from which the settlements and other aggressive, racist measures flow, directed against any Arab — in fact, against anyone who is not a Jew. Zionism as an ideology is approaching an unusual phase. Zionist objectives, as I have stated before, can be summed up as follows: security and prosperity for Jews.

After a century of Zionism, it is clear that, despite the existence of the state of Israel, the ideology has failed in achieving these two aims. Israelis, by definition the products — the living proof — of Zionism, are neither the happiest, nor the most secure and affluent Jews in the world. On the contrary. American Jews may be the model to which Hertzl and his associates aspired. Russian Jews, now free to emigrate as they please, also enjoy a level of security which heavily armed Israeli Jews, who live in constant fear of suicide attacks, can only dream of. Even members of the Jewish community in Argentina, despite the presence of anti-Semitic organisations opposed to Zionist activities in Buenos Aires, are more secure than Israelis.

The Germans, and now the Swiss, are still wracked by guilt. Wherever Zionism becomes active, however, its enemies multiply and threaten the safety of the very Jews it sought to protect. Active, aggressive Zionism ignites the political components of Judaism and other religions. Zionism was, and will remain, one of the reasons for the resurgence of fundamentalist Christianity and Islam. In other words, the politicisation of Judaism, in its racism and exclusivist hostility, creates the very atmosphere of tension which the Jews sought to escape. Jews lived in the Middle East for centuries without coming to any harm. This was hardly the case in Europe, where they were persecuted under the Inquisition and by the Nazis. Only when militant Zionist leaders moved into Palestine and established armed organisations in Egypt, Palestine, Morocco and Iraq and other countries did hostility and tension begin to brew.

Zionism is the remnant of an era that has come to an end. It emerged among other European political movements, seeking to improve the lot of Jews. Their situation in the twentieth century has improved to an extent that Zionism has become meaningless. Jews today, outside Israel, are wealthier and better educated, on the whole, than Muslims or Christians. In fact, their chances of success outside the Zionist umbrella is far greater than inside it. A notable example is Madeleine Albright. Zionist hostility towards Albright was triggered by her attempt to prove that she succeeded without Zionist backing while concealing her Jewish ancestry. Many others like her succeeded. In other words, Jews can succeed without Zionism. In fact, their success could be attributed to their deliberate detachment from Zionism or political Judaism. In the US, Albright and the Jewish lobby dictate foreign policy; in Britain, Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind and Jewish MPs play the same role; and in Russia, Foreign Minister Yvgeny Primakov and numerous other prominent Jewish figures are in charge of the media and strategic studies centres surrounding Yeltsin and the Kremlin.

I believe that it is time for the Jewish people of Israel to abandon the Zionist ideology which has plunged the region into a series of cataclysms. Jews in this region could live in permanent, real and comprehensive peace as easily as their counterparts in the US and Europe, if they abandon the political component of Judaism, the aggression and racism encouraged by Zionism. Equally important is the need for them to accept life with non-Jews in Palestine as equal citizens with the same rights and responsibilities.

In our era, certain principles are priorities. Most important are equality and human rights. It is therefore illogical that the whole world seeks prosperity based on equality and respect for human rights, while we in the Middle East are victims of a doctrine which upholds neither equal rights for the individual, nor the right of citizenship for all, nor mutual responsibility. In other words, Palestinians are the victims of Zionist aggression, expansionism and racism. Zionism has fulfilled its mission in the service of the powerful nations and their imperialist policies. It still serves American interests more than it serves the interests of the Jewish people worldwide and Israel in particular. Zionism is no longer of vital interest to Jews, that is if it was ever important to them. The Jews managed quite well without Zionism. As an ideology, it is no longer suitable in the post-Cold War era. Zionism, like other sensitive issues which the world avoided discussing during the Cold War, must now be discussed openly and judged freely. Zionism is an obstacle which must be eliminated if both Arabs and Jews actually want to achieve a real, just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, and if we genuinely wish to see the Palestinian and Jewish peoples co-exist as citizens who enjoy equal rights and responsibilities in a modern society where freedom prevails.

*The writer is the director of the Arab Centre for Development and Futuristic Research.*

## Reflections By Hani Shukrallah

# As Copenhagen turns

The futility of the Copenhagen Declaration and its "Alliance for Arab-Israeli Peace" should provide an impetus for the Egyptian debate to move beyond an event which, even when judged in terms of the declared objectives of its protagonists, was a fiasco. Copenhagen made an exceedingly small, if any, impression on Israeli public opinion, and a minute, if any, "dent" in the anti-normalisation stance adopted by the bulk of the Egyptian intelligentsia and organised "civil society".

It is only natural, therefore, that the "peace process" after Copenhagen should look pretty much the same as it did before: Palestinian Arab land continues to be confiscated; the siege of Arab Jerusalem is to be made complete and the go-ahead is given to construction of the Har Homa settlement on Palestinian land in the Abu Ghnaim area — expropriated by Labour "doves" in 1991; Israeli soldiers in full combat gear are deployed throughout "the territories"; the Labour "doves" show no sign of objection; Arab League representatives make the usual grumbles; Washington mutters ineffectually and urges Arafat to adopt even more "confidence building" measures; Netanyahu warns the Palestinians not to oppose the construction of the settlements, intimating that any protests would expose them to the kind of massive butchery unleashed during last year's protests against the Jerusalem tunnel, and scoffs at such "unrealistic expectations" as the return of all Palestinian land, the return of Arab Jerusalem, a Palestinian state, or granting the right of return to diaspora Palestinians.

This, while some among us would begrudge us even our anger.

But a cavalier attitude towards Egyptian anger at Netanyahu's, and previous Israeli governments', blatant violation of Palestinian and Arab rights, sense of dignity and life is one of the main reasons why the Copenhagen affair "backfired", to use Mohamed Sid-Ahmed's word, in the way that it did.

Last week, I suggested that the Copenhagen affair had resulted in the exact opposite of its Egyptian protagonists' declared objectives, and attributed this only partially to miscalculation. We need to dig a little deeper, however, if we are to find out how such sophisticated intellectuals could make such gross miscalculations. To do so should help move the debate beyond the Copenhagen interlude, and also beyond the kind of morally reprehensible and self-defeating personal attacks against the Egyptian participants which have characterised the interventions of some of the parties to the debate.

Two basic features of the approach of Egypt's Copenhagen protagonists should explain the setting which almost inevitably gave rise to miscalculations, and indicate some of the more profound dilemmas facing the self-proclaimed "realistic" tendency in Egypt and the Arab world, in its largely desperate attempts to make something out of the current peace process, which has proven to be nothing other than an American-sponsored Israeli peace.

The first of these features could be summed up in the Egyptian protagonists' apparently total confusion as to the nature and identity of their constituency; the second, in the way their desperate search for effective Israeli allies works to make them turn their backs on Israelis who genuinely support Palestinian and Arab rights, for the sake of such "mainstream" Israelis as David Kimche and Likudnik Maxim Levy, the brother of David Levy, Israel's current foreign minister. I will deal with the first of these in this article, and the second in the future.

To propose a strategy which the Egyptian intelligentsia and civil society will adopt, you need obviously to mobilise at least a significant section of both around that strategy. The blessings of Arafat, the Egyptian government or the EU are worthwhile only if you are acting on their behalf, but count very little when your objective is to build "a popular alliance" — clearly, you need at least some people who are willing to join.

True, our up-and-coming mega-entrepreneurs qualify as a section of "civil society", though I suspect they would find the appellation "popular" something of an insult. They, however, have had the benefit of three economic summits, annual meetings in Davos, not to speak of countless other encounters with their Israeli counterparts, including yesterday's meeting with the prime minister himself. Copenhagen pales in comparison, and, as I noted last week, the Egyptian businessmen's "entrepreneurial spirit" has had little need of the Danish capital to move in Israel's direction.

What the businessmen do need, however, is a more hospitable climate for their largely secret business dealings with Israel. A spy's cover had to be blown for the Egyptian public to discover for the first time that we had an Israeli textile factory operating in Egypt, possibly one of several we know nothing about. For all we know, we may be eating Jaffa oranges and Israeli bananas, but I've yet to come across a fruit seller who is willing to admit it, not to speak of advertising it.

This, obviously, brings us back full circle to that section of Egyptian civil society which includes virtually all the country's professional and trade unions, the bulk of its civic organisations — indeed, I have not heard of even a single non-governmental organisation in Egypt which has come out openly in support of Copenhagen — as well as the great majority of its writers, scholars, artists, film-makers, journalists, etc. To suggest that some, or even many, of these are intimidated by the rest begs the question of why the rest are able to intimidate, since the anti-normalisation stance is backed neither by coercive state bodies nor by powerful business interests.

The Egyptian intelligentsia and civil society may not be in the best of health, but they're all any of us, including the Copenhagen protagonists — at least insofar as they pursue a strategy designed on their behalf — have got. It seems somewhat absurd, therefore, to devise a strategy for a group of people, fail to convince them of it, and then denounce them for rejecting it.

The identity crisis plaguing the Egyptian protagonists of Copenhagen is an expression, however, of the iron-clad limitations of their frame of reference; the larger aim of the whole operation, and they admit this freely, is no more than to give the current peace process, with Oslo at its heart, a little nudge.

But by now it has become quite clear that this process is set in an Israeli mold, embodies a balance of forces in which Israel, backed solidly by the US, can define the precise outcome, and has already done so, and whereby the whole logic of this process is to divest the Palestinian and Arab parties of their ability to resist, tame them into submission and teach them, via helicopter gunships and missiles, the lessons of realism.

Palestinians and Arabs must learn to accept that they are all hostages to Israeli security, they are called upon to believe that an Israeli life is worth hundreds of Arab lives, the starvation and humiliation of a whole population is fair punishment for disparate bombings committed by desperate individuals, the massive bombing of civilians, the destruction of a country's infrastructure and the massacre of over one hundred unarmed men, women and children is just retribution for the slight injury of two Israelis. 400 newly arrived fanatical Jewish settlers from the US have as much, or even more, right to a 160,000-strong Palestinian town than its own population, Israel, by virtue of its being "an oasis of Western rationalism and democracy" can enjoy a nuclear stockpile, which is absolutely denied its surrounding, always potentially crazed "Arab hordes", and that Arab regimes must hunt down, detain without charges and torture all potential enemies of Israeli security, so that Israeli "democracy" may flourish.

We are asked to sit and listen quietly while Bibi Netanyahu gives us lessons in his own brand of political science: if all national and ethnic minorities got states, the majority of the world's nation states would disintegrate — conveniently forgetting that only in Apartheid South Africa were these "minorities" denied at least formal citizenship rights.

No less importantly, we are called upon to re-write our own history in a way that is compatible with the "peace process". Deir Yassin and the countless other massacres of Palestinians in 1947 and '48 were incidental to the liberation struggle of the Jewish people. The usurpation of Palestine was a triumph of Jewish independence and self-determination, the tripartite aggression of 1956 was a defensive war against Gamal Abdel-Nasser's arrogance and defiance, and so was the June war in '67. Indeed, all our defeats and humiliations at Israeli hands, all the death and destruction we have suffered, are our own fault. The brightest moments of our history are Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and Abu Mazen and co's goings on in Oslo. Had we learnt the lessons of "realism" early enough none of the suffering, wars, destruction and humiliations need have happened.

All this in return for what? A Palestinian bantustan. This everyone who is not deceiving either himself, or the rest of us, knows. Are Egyptians then supposed to abandon the boycott — their main, and possibly only, currently available means of expressing their anger and defiance as well as their solidarity with their Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian brothers and sisters — just to help Arafat get self-rule arrangements over 60 rather than 40 per cent of the West Bank, have a few more, rather than a few less of the trappings of statehood and presidential pomp and circumstance? Even this is highly dubious, judging by the Israelis' complete lack of interest in Copenhagen and its "International Alliance for Arab-Israeli peace".

Of course, the boycott as a weapon for resistance is modest, defensive and pacific in the extreme. Let us not fool ourselves, this is no economic boycott. It is not really hurting Israel, nor is it in any way an effective bargaining card in the peace negotiations. In material terms, the most the Egyptian boycott can hope to achieve is to force the businessmen to do their business with the Israelis in secret, which is somewhat limiting, and to prevent, or at least make extremely difficult, the setting up of a public US-backed Israeli lobby in Egypt. The most important feature of the boycott, however, is largely symbolic. It underlines that, 18 years after Camp David, Egyptians have not been cowed into submitting to Israeli supremacy, have not internalised the discourse of the peace process and Israel's version of their history, can still empathise with their Palestinian and Arab brothers and sisters, and can hold on to a will to resist, even if at some future date.

More than anything else, it is this symbolic dimension that seems to so annoy the Israeli establishment, including such "semi-establishment" figures as Copenhagen's David Kimche. It signals, after all, that though Pax Israeliana may be triumphant now, it is not very secure in the future.

The boycott may be an extremely modest weapon, of little or negligible effect on the current peace process, and is definitely unsuitable, in itself, to provide a viable alternative to this process. All this may well be true, and there is no doubt that there is an intense need to search for, study and debate alternative strategies, which may or may not include the boycott, at least in its present form. As Mohamed Sid-Ahmed has noted, Copenhagen's single positive contribution may lie in its triggering of such a debate. It has not, however, presented us with an alternative strategy, but rather with the role of extras in Oslo's on-going soap opera — a role which, even in Oslo terms, is of highly dubious dramatic effect, and hardly apt to inspire or stimulate.

# Hyde and seek

**Nehad Selaiha** is thrilled and chilled by Empty Space Company's adaptation of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

I do not think I am singular in my deep fascination with doors and windows. Whether open or shut, dimly or brightly lit, they flirt with one's imagination, whispering tantalisingly of the human dramas that lie behind them. I seem to remember that it was Virginia Woolf who, in a passing remark in one of her books, alerted me to the imaginative power and telltale potential of these functional objects.

It was such an object that formed the centre and gravitational constant of Andrew Holmes's production *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, presented by the Empty Space Theatre Company at Al-Gomhouria Theatre last week. The name of the company had prepared us somewhat for the starkly empty stage that gaped at us as we trooped into the lush auditorium. The title of the play also had triggered off certain expectations long before the show started. Like 'Hamlet' or 'Romeo', the names 'Jekyll and Hyde' have become, largely through cinema, part of popular culture, acquiring denotative value even for people who have never come into direct contact with the eponymous words that immortalised these characters and for whom the name Robert Louis Stevenson may mean nothing. There was an air of excitement and you could feel that people were looking forward to being deliciously frightened.

Well, it did not turn out to be that simple. Within a very short time the style of the production revealed itself and it was goodbye to any hopes of passive, lazy watching. It was like a game that needed our active participation and imaginative involvement. The story was there, in Robin Brook's intelligent and concentrated adaptation which stuck faithfully to the novel at least in terms of theme and verbal texture. But the experience of the production far surpassed the mere following of a good yarn with a Faustian hero. The excitement stemmed mainly from the demands constantly made on our imagination; one had to be alert all the time, constructing the scene, supplying links and details, defining and redefining identities and locations. It was a thrilling, exhilarating effort, and creative in the most satisfying sense. Suddenly the familiar story was not familiar anymore and gained in symbolic power and emotional depth and complexity.

One often forgets how much sophistication and imaginative daring it takes to attain real simplicity. Out of the many details in Stevenson's novel, designer Anna Georgiadou chose one single item: the back door of Dr Jekyll's laboratory. Exaggeratedly high, forbiddingly grey and weather-beaten, it dominated the whole stage as the one solid, fixed object. Around it the four actors created imaginary doors through mime and as the action was repeated, quite pointedly sometimes, the presence of this visible door, which remained grimly shut throughout, except for the few stunning moments when it revealed Mr Hyde, grew unbearably sinister and menacing. In one unforgettable scene Mr Utterson (played by Simon Walter) stands looking fixedly at the door in a puzzled, troubled manner. The light dims then brightens and the other three actors (Andrew Wheaton, Adam Fahey and Steph Bramwell) dash around, creating an early morning street scene, then the light dims again suggesting that Dr Jekyll's lawyer had spent a whole day trying to puzzle out the mystery of the enigmatic door. By the end of the performance, it is no longer a door but a rich and potent metaphor.

Around this visible centre, Andrew Holmes created a series of vivid, haunting images that followed each other at a galloping speed; his material was the bodies and voices of his four excellent actors who provided many of the sound effects that helped the audience's imagination along. For mood and atmosphere, Ron Hollis's sensitive lighting plan and Richard Heacock's original score were invaluable. The accurate costumes, together with the slightly mannered style of acting and the general colour-scheme strongly suggested the Victorian age but without placing the action in any definite realistic time. Indeed, in every detail, one could see that a lot of artistic energy and deep thinking had gone into the making of this show. It is a pity that some members of the audience failed to appreciate it either because of the language barrier or because they failed to accept its difficult terms and enter whole-heartedly and actively into the spirit of the game.

Music

# Star finds and mad cows

**David Blake** on moos and more

*Cairo Symphony Orchestra (Great Symphonies V): Ahmed Abu Zahra, piano; Fred Buttkewitz, conductor; Cairo Opera House, Main Hall, 1 March*

Cairo is a big place and mega calls its own tune musically. It doesn't have to agree to anything, even basic publicity. Either or, you're in or out. Go to the desert if you wish, for there is plenty of sand around. So where in all our lives have Ahmed Abu Zahra and Fred Buttkewitz been? Out and about in the sands of yesteryear, in London, Paris and points east. And now they are here in Cairo, belatedly and the mega-village gets to meet two stars, for stars they are.

Their concert with the Cairo Symphony Orchestra was a surprise packet which exploded about us with delight. There had been rumours of cancellations but came the night and we, the audience, were at their feet. A new wind blew through the opera. Happiness reigned. There was shouting, pleasure, calls for more.

An occasion had taken place. It was a ball.

There is no need to sing the same sad refrain. One need no longer ask where have all the pianists gone for there was a true one here, making a fragment of Cairo history with the city's first ever performance of Bela Bartok's third piano concerto.

Abu Zahra was trained here at the conservatoire, went abroad, studied with Andras Shiff, James Avery and Barbara Fry. Now, at 26 years old, he had come to storm the battlements of the Cairo musical scene. Bartok needs assistance here — he is not loved as the big pop piano concertos are. But he could have no better advocate than Abu Zahra, an extraordinary young Egyptian. Put him right up top of your list of new young pianists. Only superlatives do justice to both his performance and choice of material.

He might have given us yet another Beethoven, or the big B minor of Tchaikovsky. What is exciting is that he will always be synonymous with the Bartok 3.

Tall, handsome, an immaculate but casually worn tail-coated suit, a complete "international" manner. No nose in the skies for him. He sat beautifully, no fuss, then the music began. Quiet, perfect, as deft as a young Lipatti, but quite beyond that player when the big strength began.

The concerto begins quietly, an eerie whisper on the Bartokian breeze, the pause before the storm. It came. But like all Bartok it was a new and quite unexpected storm. Nothing frontal. It stole up on you, then a crack in the back. This storm hit a spinal nerve. Shock. Riven, the listener must adjust. Abu Zahra was glorious. Nothing fancy or theatrical, he seemed to disappear into the noise, totally absorbed. What remained was revelation. He is not all over the platform but in the piano. The big physique has gone elsewhere, leaving only the beautiful flying hands.

Can anything more be said of such a performance? Bartok died in 1945 before finishing the concerto. The posthumous bones and architecture were gathered up by Tibo Serby, the Hungarian composer, into the forms we have, carefully prepared by Bartok. With his first two piano concerti Bartok brought to a close an era of composition that had run from Haydn to Schoenberg. The form got lost. Bartok broke the mould into even smaller pieces but had the genius to reassemble them into a composite whole of his own.

Fred Buttkewitz, with the Cairo Symphony Orchestra in alert and aggressive mood, wove the sound in and out, over and under Bartok's endless patterns and self-imitations. Tunes — almost zigeuner — appear and are mishandled deliberately, ending up as something different. At times three different rhythms are going on at the same time, confusing to listen to, thrilling to watch. Abu Zahra and Buttkewitz leapt at and over drums, desert, moonscapes, battlefields, bell sequences, thunder, lightning, coming in the end to a sort Nirvana of sheer energy.

This music and its performance took us far beyond enjoyed pleasures, giving a close-up view of the anatomy of music. The conductor Szell said of such music: "There are those for whom it is done, the rest don't matter." And the pianists who can perform it are only partly human. From a far, far country, they belong in the sky.



Ahmed Abu Zahra

*Amadeus Chamber Orchestra 6th Anniversary Concert; Alain Margoni, conductor; Cairo Opera House, Small Hall, 28 February*

It is perhaps unfortunate that the birthday comeback of the Amadeus Chamber Orchestra was followed immediately by the concert above. Yet despite the big artillery elsewhere on the first of the month, the Amadeus maintained a brave and serene surface to the last gasp.

Six years is a long time for anything to survive the attrition of Cairo. Something over the years is bound to go. Nothing is easier than for a small orchestra to stick to the shadows of late 18th century chamber salon music, and nothing more treacherous. Everyone enjoys security, but it is dangerous to chug peacefully between Bocherini and Vivaldi again and again until even the Amadeus groupies call for a change.

Director Samir Khoury is a tireless synthesizer and arranger, but even with him in charge it looked, a year ago, as if the Amadeus would slip into port forever. This was not to be. The groupies were there, and so was the audience. The performers were different, they changed the notes, but the crowd remained.

The Amadeus has taken on an almost international look. Maybe it is cellular therapy injections that have given them a new thrust and some new material. And certainly the crowd in the auditorium showed that there is an audience for the soft, silky tone of such an orchestra.

First, the *Sibelius Romance*, which was played warmly and with some of the edgy tones needed. It was better than what followed. This orchestra loves Italy, the Siren South. We had three guitar concertos in a row, one Vivaldi, one Baston and finally a world première in memory of De Falla by the Spanish composer Turull. The guitar soloist was Josep Henriquez and the evening's conductor Alain Margoni, who directed the Bizet opera *The Pearl Fishers* here recently.

The Vivaldi was enchanting music, marine, flowery, with gentle musical flourishes to its blue surface rocking away to Cythera, but without Cavafy's welcome lemon juice.

Baston. Different mood, different time. Clever, cooler, more plangent. The guitar playing was rather dull, unchanging, and unlike the orchestra, who were courtly and high-toned.

Memorial to De Falla lost its notes, but the orchestra kept going. De Falla was grand and formal, which his tribute was not. Still, the Spanish rhythms swirled around in the warm sound of the Amadeus. Then came the Bach piano concerto in re mineur with Dina El-Leithy as player. El-Leithy is a late romantic. The dark granite curves of Bach's music were missing. Her touch in the first part had no tension or darkness. Nothing of Bach is easy, nothing ever soft-edged.

This concerto is as close to pop as Bach ever got. In spite of benign aspects he was no harbinger of joy — the music, no matter how heavenly, always rests perilously atop the forces of imminent disaster. He unleashes no blasts from hell here, but the salutary warning is always there and El-Leithy found herself out of her depth. In Bach's weaving and spinning areas, El-Leithy picked up her own tempo, despite Margoni's attempts at first aid, and the playing began to sparkle. But Bach lies outside her concept at the moment. No deadly declensions for her.

Last item was Gustav Holsts' *Saint Paul Suite*. This could be described as mad cow music. Moo-ings and moanings, skirts and udders aflutter, what are the cows up to? No corn beef hash for them. Over the hills and far away in new season Laura Ashley dresses.

The concert which introduced Egypt to Bartok's No.3 opened with another B — Bernstein, and the overture to his operetta *Candide*. Sophistry and colour and a long drawn narrative facing up to and surviving the dangers of life gave rise to the same sort of music — brilliance and hilarity. It had a Broadway polish over a Versailles architecture. This music suited Fred Buttkewitz who gave it a performance which burst into the auditorium in an explosion of sheer physical force, like the band of the Old Empire Leicester Square Music Hall. Loud, vulgar, but never cheap. It certainly sharpened the atmosphere for what was to come.

The second part of the concert was the *Symphonie Fatastique* of Berlioz. Not everyone loves it, but no one can deny it its rightful position. Like the painting of the destruction of Constantinople by Delacroix it stands at two gateways: highway and exit of the European Romantic movement in music. It cannot be knocked over. One must go for it straight on, into the gut area, or go around it missing almost everything. Fred Buttkewitz chose gut and we had the lot — canons, bells, storms, Lisztian tunes.

For sheer power and variety Buttkewitz pulled down the old and set up the new and let the entire thing shoot up on a very robust cloud of shower gel and champagne to somewhere between earth and a late Rolling Stones rock concert. Shouts of joy.

A thought: the Cairo Symphony has become a city treasure. It merely needs publicity to root it firmly to Cairo — otherwise, who knows.

## Listings

### EXHIBITIONS

**Sherif Abdel-Badie (Paintings)**
*Espace Gallery, 1 El-Sherifein St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 6 March.*

**Mohamed Abdel-Moneim (Drawings & Watercolours)**
*Mashrabiya Gallery, 8 Champollion St, Downtown. Tel 578 4494. Daily 11am-8pm. Until 6 March.*

**Hoda El-Ghalaty**
*French Cultural Centre, Heliopolis Annex, 27 Sabri Abu Alam St, Ismailia Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 417 4824. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 10am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 6 March.*
Oil paintings under the title Orient and Occident.

**Huda Lutfi (Paintings)**
*Ewart Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 6373. Until 7 March.*

**Margo Veillon (Self portraits)**
*Cairo Berlin Gallery, 17 Youssef El-Guindi St, Bab El-Louk. Tel 393 1764. Daily exc Sun, 12pm-8pm. Until 8 March.*

**Cairo 1850-1950**
*Italian Cultural Centre, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 341 5723. Until 8 March.*

**Abdel-Aziz El-Guindi (Drawings)**
*El-Patio Gallery, 4 Rd 77c, Golf Area, Maadi. Tel 351 6654. Daily exc Sun 10am-7pm. Until 10 March.*

**Makram Henein (Drawings)**
*Egyptian Centre for International Cultural Cooperation, 11 Shagaret El-Dorr St, Zmalek. Tel 341 5419. Daily 10am-3pm & 4pm-9pm. Until 13 March.*

**Woman and Memory (Paintings)**
*Ewart Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 6373. Daily exc Fri. 9am-8pm.*

**Max Skladanowsky: film pioneer, producer, businessman and photographer**
*Goethe Institute, 5 El-Bustan St, Bab El-Louq. Tel 575 9877. Daily ecx Sun. 10am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. 11-17 March.*

**Ervand Dermirdjian (Paintings)**
*El-Hanager, Opera House grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily 10am-10pm. Until 11 March*

**Andrei Boubentsov and Vasili Poliakov (Paintings)**
*Russian Cultural Centre, 127 Tahrir St, Dokki. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 18 March.*

**Dian El-Gharib and Mohamed Abdel-Moneim (Paintings)**
*Espace Gallery, 1 El-Sherifein St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2pm & 6pm-9pm. 9-22 March.*

**Mohamed Mandour and Abdel-Rahman El-Nashar**
*Extra Gallery, 3 El-Nessim St, (corner of Montaza St) Zamalek. Tel 340 6293. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 22 March.*

**The Other Half of the Sky**
*Italian Cultural Centre, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 341 5723. 10-25 March.*
Featuring works by Renata de Mattia, Lidia Costantini and Fadia Badrawi

**Peggy Crawford (Photographs)**
*Sony Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 5422. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 27 March.*
Photographs of traditional Yemeni architecture.

**Spring**
*Salama Gallery, 36/A Ahmed Orabi St, Mohandessin. Tel 346 3242. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 10am-2.30pm & 5pm-9pm. Until 30 March.*

**Salah Enani's Cinematics**
*Doroub Gallery, 4 Latin America St, Garden City. el 354 7951. Daily 10am-10pm. Until 10-30 March.*

**Domestic Architecture in Islamic Egypt**
*Rare Books and Special Collections Library, AUC, corner of El-Sheikh Rihan and Mansour Sts. Tel 357 5436. Sun-Wed 8.30am-7pm, Thur 8.30am-5pm & Sat 12pm-5pm.*

**The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil**
*1 Kafour El-Akhshid St, Dokki. Tel 336 2376. Daily exc Mon, 10am-6pm.*
Egypt's largest collection of nineteenth century European arts.

**Egyptian Museum**
*Tahrir Sq, Downtown. Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 8am-5pm; Fri 9am-11.15am & 1pm-3pm.*

**Coptic Museum**
*Mar Girgis, Old Cairo. Tel 362 8766. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11am & 1pm-3pm.*

**Islamic Museum**
*Port Said St, Ahmed Maher St, Bab El-Khalq. Tel 390 9930/390 1520. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11.30am & 2pm-4pm.*

**Museum of Modern Egyptian Art**
*Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily exc Mon. 10am-1pm & 5pm-9pm.*

**Mohamed Nagui Museum**
*Château Pyramids, 9 Mahmoud Al-Guindi St, Giza.*

**Mahmoud Mukhtar Museum**
*Tahrir St, Gezira. Daily exc Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm.*

### FILMS

**The Incident**
*Japanese Cultural Centre, 106 Qasr El-Aini St, Garden City. Tel 355 3962/3. 6 March, 6pm.*

**New German Film Series**
*Goethe Institute, 5 El-Bustan St, Bab El-Louq. Tel 575 9877. 6 March, 6.30pm.*
Auch Zwerge Haben Klein Angefangen (1969) directed by W Herzog.

**Italian Films**
*Italian Cultural Centre, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791.*
*8 March, 7pm:* Cronaca Familiare (1962).
*9 March, 7pm:* La Scorta, directed by R Tognazzi.

**Skladanowsky Memorial**
*Goethe Institute, as above. 11 March.*
*6.30pm:* The Winter Garden Programme. This 7-minute production by Max Skladanowsky (1885) is the first film ever projected in Germany.
*7pm:* The Skladanowsky Brothers. Directed by Wim Wenders (1995).

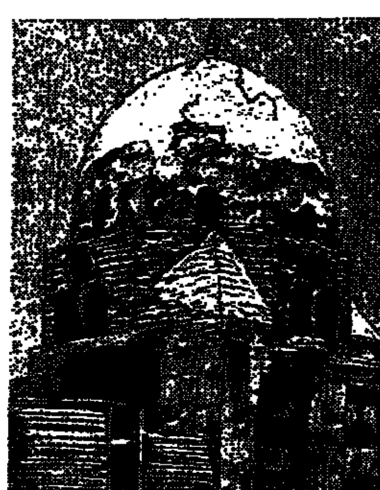
**Yo Soi El Que Tu Buscabas**
*Cervantes Institute for Spanish Culture, 20 Adly St, Kodak passage, Downtown. Tel 395 2326. 12 March, 7.30pm.*

*Commercial cinemas change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas. Arabic films are seldom subtitled. For information, contact the venue.*

**Bekhit Wa Adila II (Bekhit And Adila II)**
*Rivoli I, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Roxy, Roxy Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0344. Daily 10am, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. MGM, Kolleyat El-Nasr Sq, Maadi. Tel 352 3066. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Metro, 35 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 393 3897. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. El-Haram, El-Haram St, Giza. Tel 385 8358. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Cosmos I, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Diana Palace, 17 El-Alfi St, Emadeddin, Downtown. Tel 924 727. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. El-Salam, 65 Abdel-Hamid Badawi St, Heliopolis. Tel 293 1072. Daily 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.*

**Hassan El-Loll**
*Sphinx, Sphinx Sq, Mohandessin. Tel 346 4017. Daily 8pm. Rivoli II, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm 8pm & 10pm. Tiba II, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.*

**Hallaq Housh**
*Cosmos II, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Lido, 23 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 934 284. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.*



Abdel-Aziz El-Guindi

**Imra'a Fawq El-Qemma (A Woman At The Top)**
*Tiba I, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Miami, 38 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 574 5656. Daily noon, 3.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm.*

**A Time To Kill**
*El-Horreya I, El-Horreya Mall, Roxy, Heliopolis. Daily 1pm, 6pm & 9pm. Ramsis Hilton I, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight.*

**Spy Hard**
*Radio, 24 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 575 6562. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Ramsis Hilton II, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 330pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight. El-Horreya II, El-Horreya Mall, Roxy, Heliopolis. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, & 9pm.*

**The Glimmer Man**
*Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 335 5726. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Karim I, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.*

**Jack and Sarah**
*Normandy, 31 El-Ahram St, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0254. Daily 12.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.*

**Cover-Up**
*New Odeon II, 4 Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 2.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm.*

**Don Juan de Marco**
*New Odeon III, 4 Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 2.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm.*

**Tin Cup**
*Cairo Sheraton, El-Galaa St, Giza. Tel 360 6081. Daily 10.30am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm & midnight.*

**Courage Under Fire**
*Karim II, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.*

**Maximum Risk**
*New Odeon I, 4 Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 2.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm. Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 335 5726. Thur & Sat, midnight.*

### MUSIC

**Song Recital**
*Cervantes Institute for Spanish Culture, 20 Boulos Hanna St, Dokki. Tel 360 1746. 6 march, 8pm.*
Performed by Iman Mustafa (soprano), Inas Abdel-Daim (flute) and Olga Kousnetzova (piano).

**National Arabic Music Ensemble**
*Small Hall, Opera House, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 342 0589. 6 March, 8pm.*

**Egyptian Chamber Orchestra**
*Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 7 March, 8pm.*

**Cairo Symphony Orchestra**
*Main Hall, as above. 8 March, 8pm.*
Music by Joplin, J. Johnson and Eubie Blake with soloist Butch Thompson.

**Piano Recital**
*Small Hall, as above. 9 March, 8pm.*
Performed by Maltese Lucia Micallif.

**Cairo Opera Dance Theatre**
*Gomhouriya Theatre, Gomhouriya St. Tel 391 9956. 6-11 March, 9pm.*

**Cairo Symphony Orchestra**
*Gomhouriya Theatre, as above. 12 March, 9pm.*
Conducted by Kamal Hilal.

**Concert for Violoncello and Piano**
*Ewart Hall, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 6373. 12 March, 8pm.*
Cellist Tamaz Gomeloauri and British pianist David Hales.

### DANCE

**Callas Maria**
*El-Hanager, Opera House grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. 9 & 10 March, 8pm.*
Choreography and solo dance by Eva-Maria Lerchenberg-Thöny, music by Alexander Zamlinsky.

### THEATRE

**Bahlool Fi Istambul (Bahlool In Istambul)**
*Ramsis Hilton Theatre, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7435. Daily 10pm, Fri & Sun 8.30pm.*

**Hekmat Hanem..Abaaz?**
*George Abiad Hall, Ezbekiya Theatre, Ataba Sq. Tel 591 1267. Daily 10pm.*

**Dastoor Ya Siadna (With Your Permission, Masters)**
*El-Fann Theatre, Nadi El-Musiqa St, Ramsis. Tel 578 2444. Daily 8.30pm.*

**Ballo (Fanfare)**
*Madinet Nasr Theatre, Youssef Abbas St, Madinet Nasr. Tel 402 0804. Daily 8.30pm, Thur 10pm.*
Starring Salah El-Saadani, directed by Samir El-Asfouri.

**El-Ganzir (The Chain)**
*El-Salam Theatre, Qasr El-Aini. Tel 355 2484. Daily exc Mon, 9pm.*

**Ka'b 'Ali (High Heels)**
*Radio Theatre, 4 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 578 4910. Daily 8pm, Wed & Thur 10pm.*

**El-Zaim (The Leader)**
*El-Haram Theatre, Pyramids Road, Giza. Tel 386 3952. Daily 8.30pm, Wed & Thur, 10pm.*
Long running play with Adel Imam

### LECTURES

**Wall Paintings in Memphite Tombs of The New Kingdom**
*Netherlands Institute for Archaeology and Arabic Studies, 1 Dr Mahmoud Azmi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 0076. 6 March, 5.30pm.*
Geoffrey Martin from the Egypt Exploration Society.

**Egypt in Greek Drama**
*Italian Cultural Institute, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. 6 March, 6pm.*
With guest of honour Dr Saad Ardas. The discussion will be followed by Pasolini's film of Oedipus Rex.

**The Loved Ones: Animal Mummies of Ancient Egypt**
*British Council, 192 El-Nil St, Agouza. Tel 301 0319. 10 March, 7pm.*
Salima Ikram, assistant professor at AUC.

**5300 Years Frozen in Ice: Recent Research on The Iceman of Alto Adige-South Tirol, Italy**
*Italian Cultural Institute, as above. 11 March, 7pm.*
Andreas Lippert from the University of Vienna.

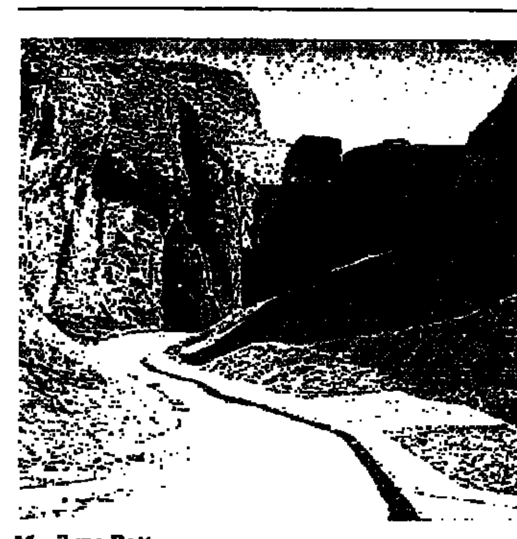
**Vers Une Sociologie du Sentiment National: Une Approche Epistémologique**
*CEDEJ, 14 Gam'eyet El-Nisr St, Mohandessin. Tel 361 1932. 11 March, 5pm.*
Sonia Dayan from the Université de Paris.

**Women and Art**
*Rare Books and Special Collections Library, AUC, corner of El-Sheikh Rihan and Mansour Sts. Tel 357 5436. 11 March, 5pm.*
Linnea Dietrich, Miami University of Ohio.

All information correct at time of going to press. However, it remains wise to check with venues first, since programmes, dates and times are subject to change at very short notice.
Please telephone or send information to Listings, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Galaa St, Cairo. Tel 5786064. Fax 5786089/833.

Compiled by **Injy El-Kashef**

## Around the galleries



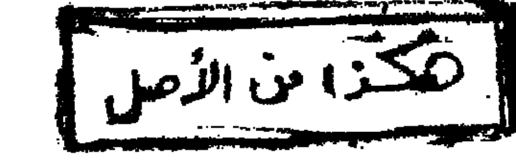
Marilyna Batte

PAINTINGS by **Marilyna Batte** are on show at the **Opera Gallery**. At first glance these landscapes appear to be photographs, so meticulous is the artist's realism. A closer examination, however, reveals that they play with perspective, combining the Near and the Far (which is the title under which they are exhibited), in a way that no ordinary camera lens can.

The **Aswan Cultural Palace** plays host to works by 16 young "spontaneous" artists. The sculptures and paintings on show are testimony to how, spontaneity notwithstanding, the artists have expressed themselves in a distinctly Egyptian aesthetic idiom.

A posthumous exhibition of sculptures by **Abdel-Aziz El-Beheiry** is on show at the **Faculty of Applied Arts**.

Reviewed by **Nagwa El-Ashri**



Though the Cairo International Festival of Children's Films appears to be more popular than ever with young audiences, it has as yet to fulfil one of its avowed aims — to kick start productions, both in the cinema and on television, aimed at children. *Al-Ahram Weekly* reviews the winners of this year's competition, and assesses new trends in the oft neglected area of children's cinema


*Young Man with Roses*, Croatian entry into the animated film section

# Creatures of the heart

Children? Animals? WC Fields' injunction about performing with either would not have got him far at the 7th Cairo International Festival of Children's Films, as **Khairyia El-Bishlawi** discovers

With regards to the Cairo International Festival of Children's films one point must be stressed: the festival actually represents an opportunity for Egyptian children, and for those adults interested in children's cinema, to view the latest productions aimed at this target audience. And anyone who has been following the festival over the years finds themselves, with increasingly alarming regularity, staggered by the quality of some of the films produced for children, a quality that makes Egyptian children's films look positively amateurish.

This year the deficiency of local productions of animated films were thrown, if anything, into even greater relief when compared to the Australian film *The Story of Rosy Dock*, to the Croatian film *Young Man with Roses* or the French production *The Fantastic Voyage of a Special Mouse*, let alone those films coming from the US, which has for long led the field in animation. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, Disney Studio's most recent production which opened the festival, provides the clearest proof yet of the chasm separating local animation from its international counterparts.

There have been seven children's film festivals held in Cairo, and it is telling that the opening screening has always been of an American film. The opening film, furthermore, has always been head and shoulders above the competition, in terms of both imagination, technical accomplishment and production values. And if the experience of the past seven years is anything to go by, one would be on safe ground in asserting that American animated films for children actually represent a case apart, almost a separate genre. The rest of the world lags far behind.

So what is the rest of the world doing, at least as represented by entries in the seventh festival? Certainly Disney Studios are not the only producers of quality films for children. This year's festival included an entry by the Canadian Rock Demmers, often dubbed the Walt Disney of the north, though the films he has produced are quite unlike those churned out by Disney Studios, both in orientation and structure.

*Whiskers*, which won the second prize in the features category, was a perfect example of the manner in which successful children's films can appeal across age groups. Unfortunately the number of entries in the features category was surprisingly small. *Whiskers*, an examination of the relationship between a child and his anthropomorphised cat, expands to focus on the manner in which this relationship impacts on the child's interaction with his family.

Among the handful of features at this years festival, the Indian entry *Hallo* must count as one of the event's pleasant surprises. It too had a plot built around a child and animal, a young girl, in this instance, and a dog, Hallo. It won a special jury prize.

The first prize in the features category went to a Chinese production, *Golden Autumn Deer*, directed by Zhan Xiang Chi. Brilliant acting by the seven year lead, stunning photography of the Chinese landscape, and an overwhelming portrayal of the life of a Chinese peasant family made for a film that is at once directly engaging and subtle.

*Storks Always Return*, the Hungarian entry in this year's festival, also maintained interest throughout. Though the subject matter might seem unlikely for a children's film, concerning as it does a political detainee in 1956, the film is narrated from the perspective of the child of prisoner. It too focuses on a central relationship between a child and an animal, in this case a stork, wounded by hunters and found by the child who nurses it back to health before it can be released. The symbolism of the film is obviously loaded, and perhaps its ideal audience comprises children old enough to ponder the relationship between freedom and the individual.

*The Summer of the Stallion*, an Argentinean/Canadian co-production directed by Andre Melancon, was also worthy of note. And once again the central relationship in the film is between animals and children. And the film was once again produced by Rock Demmers. Indeed the Canadian filmmaker was the subject of a mini-retrospective at the festival, with screenings of many of his films, produced between 1984 and 1994, under the collective heading *Tales for All*. All films included in this section contained actors in the 10-12 age group, and though they demurred from taking commercial considerations on board the fact that many of the films were international co-production lent them a market base that guaranteed the necessary distribution to make them successful.


*The Secrets of the Wild Panda*, winner of the Children's Jury Prize for best television programme

Certainly, if this year's crop of international films is representative, there appears to be an obsessive concern with the natural environment, and particularly with animals as the vehicle to articulate central relationships.

In contrast, films produced locally came to look not only wan, but positively sickly. Both in terms of film production, and in television programming, children appear to be getting a raw deal from local producers.

Perhaps it is a little unfair to make a direct comparison with productions originating in say, Belgium or France, countries with a long history within the genre, and local productions, but such comparisons are, alas, inevitable. Nor do the local products emerge favourably when compared with work in other Third World countries, something that was underlined by the inclusion in this year's festival of a panorama of Indian films.

That said, there were some signs of improvement, most noticeably in the area of TV programming. Mona Abul-Nasr's animated film for television, *The Apple of the Magic Treasure*, indicated that there might be light at the end of the tunnel, and was an intelligent treatment of well-known fables. There are, it appears, a number of animators now working locally capable of bringing well-known characters to life on the screen and *The White Elephant*, directed by Zeinab Zamzam, constituted a second ray of hope.

*Felfel and Falfoul* by Atia Adel Khairi also displayed a great deal of promise, and one might expect this woman director to reach the peak of her profession if this 24 minute animated short, concerning a talented elephant and a self-promoting, money grubbing ant, is anything to go by.

Far less successful was the resurrection of an old radio programme *A Vow* as a film starring puppets. Trite, sentimental, and hopelessly outdated, this tale of a poor but happy family from Al-Azhar — man, loving wife and seven children — seemed to have very little, if any relevance, to children in the 1990s.

The majority of Egyptian films remained tediously didactic, crude morality tales that patronised their purported audience. One Arab entry deserving of special mention, though, was the Saudi film *The Fairy Tales Key*, directed by a Syrian, Layali Badr. Once more familiar tales from the Arabian Nights were brought to the screen in a feature film that contrived successfully to convey the magical atmosphere of the originals, though with sufficient imagination to reinvigorate and refresh story lines with which every child is familiar, cleverly integrating animation with live performances.

# Crowding the theatres

**Janet Fine**, an American film critic who attended the children's film festival as a guest of the organisers, finds that, as far as its target audience was concerned, the event was a great success

The universal spirit of youth pervaded the seventh Cairo International Film Festival for Children, from stories of lost puppies and cats, from India and Canada, to themes sparked by childhood fantasies and fears spanning the globe. The festival (23 Feb-2 March), handled expertly by *Cairo Film Festival* President Saadeddin Wahba and his able team, provided a much needed outlet for younger movie viewers.

"It is our objective to try to place the child and all those who are concerned with his world, in just the right perspective of the positive experiments conducted in the arena of children cinema," stated Wahba. "We have shown a diversity of cinema, ranging from the panorama of Indian cinema, films of the great Canadian director Rock Demmers to the panorama from Europe of Hungarian cinema and British TV."

This "arena" was amply demonstrated at the festival opening on 23 Feb, where the stately Conference Centre took on the aura of a frenetic Sunday matinee, replete with cheering children, dancing cartoon characters and a mixture of gaiety and anticipation. Disney-produced The *Hunchback of Notre Dame* appropriately opened the festival and its re-telling of the Victor Hugo classic gripped the young audience. Its success was marked by the near complete silence of the viewers.

Although this film was originally thought too "intellectual" and perhaps depressing (a deformed hunchback as hero) for children, the Disney magic clicked once more, apparently even captivating the discriminating French, where it ranks at the top of the box-office. The film demonstrates there are no boundaries for a good children's movie, only that it should capture that combination of innocence and savvy to satiate the child and adult's imagination. It also picked up a special festival award.

The prizes awarded also demonstrated the diversity of films appealing both to adult and child. Ten films competed for the Golden, Silver and Bronze Cairo awards. The universal theme of animals — from cats to rats, deer and dogs, seems to be the best way to capture a child's heart and a jury prize.

The top Golden Cairo for Feature Films was given to the Chinese film *Golden Autumn Deer* by Zhan Xiang Chi. Studio director of China Children's Film Studio, Mr. Dou Chunqi was present in Cairo and agreed it is China's "year", picking up major prizes from world festivals. The story is a touching tale of boy and a deer. The film also won the Children Jury's Prize.

A tale of a boy and his pet, *Whiskers*, won the Silver Cairo prize. Directed by Canadian Jimmy Kauffman, once again the film proves there is nothing cuter than a cat or a dog. The third prize of Bronze was awarded to the French film *The Fantastic Voyage of a Special Mouse* by Anne Capprile. A cat and mouse pair up together to travel the world.

Spanning the globe and forgetting about war, the Golden Cairo prize for Short Films was given to the Croatian film, *Young Man With Roses*, directed by Magda Dulcic. A charming five-minute short, *The Dart*, from French director Anne Guillemard, captured the Silver prize. Special Jury Prize for Feature and Short Films was given to Indian Film *Hallo* by Santosh Sivan. This Indian National Award winner once again tells the tale of a lost puppy and uses the child actors skillfully.

Wildlife also provides that mystery of animals and the call of nature. The Cairo Festival organised an assortment of natural history films from the greatest producer of this genre, the National Geographic Society. Wildlife film maker Mark Stouffer came to the festival and three of his films were shown. He received the Children Jury's Prize for the American TV programme, *The Secrets of The Wild Panda*. Look for his Warner-produced film *American Wild Life*, about him and his brothers, to be released this summer. Obviously the market for animals is limitless.

Many of the TV and cartoon prizes were awarded to Egyptian films, reflecting the continued growth of this medium. The Golden Cairo Prize for Cartoon Films was given to *The Apple of the Magic Treasure* directed by Mona Abul-Nasr. Hungarian film *Ecotopia* by Sandoz Reisenbuchler won the Silver prize while Egyptian TV-produced *The Three Friends* by Zeinab Zamzam was taken from a 30-episode series about three friends, a giraffe, rabbit and an ape, who all learn the Arabic alphabet.

An imaginative Belgium tale about a birthday party, *Lotte*, by Luc Cooghe won the best TV programme, with Egyptian *Oasis Treasure* by Hassan Abdel-Ghani winning the Silver prize. Other creatures, the cuckoo and a giant praying mantis combined to help win Australian director Gerald Thompson's *The Cuckoo* the Bronze prize. The Egyptian programme *How Beautiful, My Country, You Are* by Gamal Abdel-Mabood received the Special Jury Prize.

The search for a character more in tune with the Arab world than Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck was reflected in the honouring of the Egyptian poet Sayed Hegab for his creation of the story of *Secrets Tree* and to Egyptian poet Nader Abul-Fotouh for his creation of the TV serial *The Missing Tone and Oasis Treasure*.

Of added interest to the festival are the large prizes, sponsored by Saudi Arabian Prince Talat Ibn Abdel-Aziz to promote Arab identity through the Arab Council for Childhood and to develop more films geared to this specialised genre. Although the competition had only Egyptian, Saudi and Syrian entries, the LE100,000 prize should encourage more film makers to participate.

Syrian director Layali Badr won the top prize (LE25,000). The talented director (who has won this prize three times before) wove the past and present in his interpretation of traditional Arabic adventure tales.

Egyptian films won the other money prizes with Mona Abul-Nasr's *The Apple of The Magic Treasure* winning second prize (LE20,000 ); third prize went to *The White Elephant* by Zeinab Zamzam; fourth prize to *Mosa The Prophet* by Mohamed Hassib and Fifth Prize (LE5,000) to five films. *Oasis Treasure* by Hassan Abdel-Ghani, *Felfel and Felfoul* by Atia Adel Khairy, *Elephant Friends* by Sameh El-Sharkawi, *Cave People* by Ahmed Ali and the lone Syrian entry, *He and She* by Nasr El-Nassani.

The success of the festival might be measured by the sold-out theatres. "No films have given us such good box-office returns for the week as these children films," remarked one theatre owner. "Children are flocking to the movies and bringing their parents too!"

The Cairo International Film Festival for Children is helping to cultivate a discerning audience of children, who when they grow up, might help provide steady audiences for the films shown at the Cairo International Film Festival.

## Plain Talk

The 7th Cairo International Festival of Children's Films is over, the prizes have been given and the curtain has come down. There is no doubt that this year's entries, whether public screenings or films in competition, were of better quality than those of previous festivals. It is clear that all the participating countries are paying great attention to this field, and whether subsidised by the government or privately financed, no efforts are spared to guarantee the quality of the films.

Egyptian participants were able to secure a number of prizes, but only for animation. In fact, unlike most of the other participating countries, there were no long or short feature films submitted by Egypt. While no one can doubt the popularity of both cartoons and puppets, feature films seem to be quite attractive to children. I personally believe, and my belief is based on experience, that children prefer feature films with human actors and actresses. They often like to identify themselves with the characters in the films and it is rather difficult for them to do this with a cartoon or a puppet.

Films aside, a number of interesting seminars were held to discuss issues relating to the art of children's films. Two leading seminars, one of which was organised by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, discussed the issues of preparing and training cadres of children's programmers. During the discussions, it was revealed that the Egyptian Art Academy has now created an institute for children's art. It is important, said one of the speakers, that the issue of children's culture be approached from a scientific point of view and not be left to amateurs.

In this respect, I feel bound to remind people of past experiences in the field of children's culture. It was in 1967 that the minister of culture, at the time Dr Tharwat Okasha, decided to establish a new bureau of child culture, attached directly to his office. I had the real pleasure of starting that advisory bureau and one of our initial tasks was to organise a specialised training course for those dealing with children. We engaged leading writers for them like Suhair El-Qalamawy, folklore experts like Abdel-Hamid Younes, child psychologists like Soumaya Fahmi and others. Those attending the course, which lasted for three months, became leading figures in the field of children's culture. It seems to me that what we need now is a similar initiative.

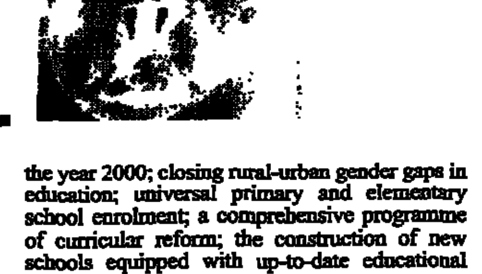
A second seminar was organised by the Arab Council for Childhood and Development, headed by Prince Talal Ibn Abdel-Aziz. The council, which allotted LE100,000 for the best Arabic film, has been in existence for a number of years and has greatly contributed to available services targetting children. The prizes the council sponsors have certainly acted as a spur to the film industry in the Arab world, as can be seen in the improved quality of the films.

The seminar was a follow up on a competition organised by the council for the creation of an Arab cartoon with prizes offered to the winners. The seminar, chaired by Qadry Hefni and including experts on psychology, media, education, animation and other specializations, discussed how the winning cartoons could be put to good use. Now that Arab cartoon characters have been born, what shall we do with them? Apart from interesting discussions, there was a general agreement that finance and storylines were the crucial requirements if anything is to evolve out of these characters. There are enough Arab technicians in the field of animation, but there is a dearth of scripts.

My contribution to the seminar was a reminder of Walt Disney who, when he produced his cartoons, was not thinking of the American child but of children in general, which is what accounted for his worldwide popularity. I stressed, and always will, the fact that values we want to implant in children, such as honesty, good will and sincerity for instance, do not differ from one country to another. This means that to attempt the creation of a purely Arab cartoon may lead to the unnecessary isolation of Arab children. Arab cartoons should address themselves not to Arab children only, but to all children of the world.

**Mursi Saad El-Din**

# The wheel keeps on turning



LAST week, the fourth Presidential Rotary Conference for Development was held in Cairo under the auspices of Mrs Mubarak. **Rania Khallaf** attended, while **Amany Abdel-Moneim** looked into efforts to rejuvenate the Rotary.

"Through service, you make life better for yourself and your community" was the theme of the Presidential Rotary Conference. Around 700 Rotarians representing 42 countries attended. The importance of enhancing health and education services for children was highlighted at most of the sessions.

"Teaching today is the art of teaching children to teach themselves. The process of learning is changing as well, with the help of technology," said Mrs Mubarak, who was awarded a certificate of honour from the president of Rotary International. "Our vision of the future," she added in her opening speech, "encompasses many educational targets: the eradication of illiteracy by the year 2000; closing rural-urban gender gaps in education; universal primary and elementary school enrolment; a comprehensive programme of curricular reform; the construction of new schools equipped with up-to-date educational tools."

Dr Peter Piot, executive director of the UN programme for combating AIDS and an active Rotarian, called upon society as a whole to participate in protecting the new generation from risks of AIDS. Rotarians have taken up many causes: environmental preservation and the eradication of illiteracy, for instance, as well as more traditional charity work.

Luis Giay, president of Rotary International, proudly noted that Rotary clubs in the region have accomplished much: the construction of a wing at the National Cancer Research Institute in Egypt; the reconstruction of Lebanon's infrastructure and the extension of health services to children; assistance to students in Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania and Algeria. "It is time to seriously consider young people, to whom we will entrust our legacy and the Rotary tradition. Let us work to develop cadres of new leaders. We must work closely with the new generation from the moment they are born to prepare them for the difficult future that lies ahead. Without that, frustration and alienation can be unexpected results," said Giay.

The young Rotarians' activities, like those of the older generation, are as varied as the needs they address. Today, there are Rotary-sponsored youth clubs all over the world. The Interact club for 14- to 18-year-olds provides for the needy, sick and disabled. "Two years ago, International Rotary rejuvenated its clubs worldwide by allowing young people aged 27 to 37 to join. The main aim was to provide opportunities for young people to cater for the special needs of the sick and disabled and to improve the quality of life in the community generally," according to Hazem Nassef, 34, president of the Giza Pharaohs Rotary.

The Giza and Qasr El-Nil clubs are exclusively for younger people. "Rotary clubs run by young people with energy and ideals are especially dynamic," says Sahar Hegazi, 27, who will chair the international committee of the Giza Pharaohs Rotary.

The young Rotarians, like their parents, are actively involved in fund-raising. Cooperating with businessmen's associations, they were able to purchase blood-testing equipment for children with cancer. In November, they held a fair at Ain Shams University where underprivileged students were able to purchase brand-new clothes at slashed prices. "It was a great success," said Hegazi triumphantly. Another fair is scheduled for the beginning of May.




## World wide waste

*My grandson is seven.* He was born in the States. Last summer he had many problems with the word "teacher". He could not really spell it. He always forgot either the a or the c. Sometimes he forgot both. He is a very smart little boy, however, and a wizard with high-tech gadgets. He plays complicated computer games; the washing machine, the microwave oven and the garbage disposal unit hold no secrets for him. He tried to teach me. He was quite nice and understanding about my lack of technological skills. I did not hear in his voice the impatient intonations I detected in my daughter's as she encouraged him when he misspelled the word "teacher". Eventually, though, he told me that it would be easier if I just waited for him to get back from school. He would operate the machines.

My daughter also has a smoke detector and a burglar alarm which went on and off without provocation. They scared the daylights out of me. She promised she would get someone to look at them. I was her guest, so all I could do was wait impatiently. I had no other choice. This was an alien environment. Even the coffee percolator, once turned on, refused to be turned off unless I vulgarly unplugged it, raising my daughter's snickers about the way I was still making coffee at home.

I can't say that this abundance of appliances, intended to help my daughter in her chores, did not frustrate me. I was also slightly envious. She and her children had stepped into the twenty-first century, leaving me behind. After all, I still make my sauces from scratch — well, almost — and whip cream by hand. To console myself, I would repeatedly remember the first paragraph of the preface to a book I love, *The Design of Everyday Things* by Donald A Norman: "We are surrounded by a large number of manufactured items, most intended to make our lives easier and more pleasant." After enumerating various pieces of equipment currently used in the performance of our daily tasks, the author adds: "If these new devices are so wonderful, why do we need special dedicated staff members to make them work?... Why do we need manuals and special instructions to use the typical business telephone? And why do these devices add to the stresses of our life rather than reduce them?" Everyone over thirty should own a copy of this book if he/she wants to hang on to his/her self-esteem.

Fortunately, I told myself on my way back from the States, in Egypt we don't really have to keep up with all this progress. It doesn't concern us. I personally own a normal telephone, the grey variety, with a real dial. I tried buying an answering machine once. Unable to even register the simple outgoing message correctly, I offered it to my younger daughter, who had no problems not only using it, but listening to her messages when away. Obviously she, too, belongs to the high-tech generation, although she lives here. The other day, she could not understand why I was unable to open my safe, of which I had set the code by mistake. "You mean that all these years you have used it as a sort of box," she asked incredulously, "opening and closing it with the key?" "I get confused with the clockwise and counter-clockwise turns," I said defensively. "Besides, this safe is small enough for any beginner thief to carry away and open in his own good time. So what use is the code?" Like my grandson, my daughter chose not to comment on my abilities. As an added precaution, though, she carefully placed the instructions on how to open the safe in her own wallet, lest I discard the little booklet, having finally forgotten what it was for.

The point is that, with the advance of technology, I am becoming more and more dependent on the younger generation. My motor skills are intact; my reflexes unimpaired, I have a good pair of contact lenses and appropriate glasses for every occasion. My brains hum in harmony with the universe. All in all I am a useful, productive, actively functioning member of our society. So why do I need my daughter to reset the code on our theft-proof car radio? Why do I have to wait for her to use the printer, or retrieve articles that I have "misplaced" by hitting the wrong button on my state-of-the-art keyboard? Why does she have to gently tell me, observing my vain efforts, "Leave it Ma, I'll do it later"? Why is she the one to surf the web, write our e-mail messages, operate the cellular phone, the new decoder and the car's windshield wipers? I discovered only the other day that I could shift into fifth gear in a car I have been driving for four years at least, although I still don't know why I would want to do a thing like that. I dread the idea that my daughter may decide to take a trip and leave me to face these monsters which are taking over my life. Why do they keep advertising them as aids to the old and the handicapped? If anything they are crippling. Could it be a conspiracy against the more senior members of our society? And there is no point in thinking that, in time, they will become as familiar as our old gas stoves. There is no time. Technology is on the move.

New, more complicated devices are being launched before one can begin to read the pamphlets of the old ones. And the questions of the uninformed, who can not even use the proper jargon, are always met with pitying sneers. When I dared to ask what measure of credibility information picked up on the Web would have, the brief answer was: none. "So why would I want to..." Why, everybody who is anybody at all does it. Would I like to be considered a nobody? Of course not. What is our password again?

I just wish that they would invent a simple device to remind me that my water is boiling. I might burn the house down while accessing information I really have to think up a use for. Maybe I should look into smoke detectors after all. I am sure that my daughter would know how to operate them.

**Fayza Hassan**

# Shattered stereotypes

Organisations purporting to improve women's status and economic conditions continue to proliferate. But are they making a difference? As **Mariz Tadros** reports, the gap between theoretical improvements and measures which really make a difference still remains to be bridged

It is almost an adage: if mothers must choose between sending daughters or sons to school, they will automatically keep the girls at home. Yet findings of focus group sessions conducted by the American University in Cairo's Social Research Centre and funded by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, reveal that this may not necessarily be true. Some working-class women would choose to keep their daughters at school "to guarantee her security — perhaps she ends up in a stable government job," while taking the boys out to learn a craft or skill from which they will make a little money.

The group sessions also indicated that financial rather than cultural considerations ultimately determine a family's decision on their girls' starting or continuing their education. It is, as many mothers explained, a financial killer to keep children at school, especially since private tuition is now an integral, if unofficial, part of the education package. Surprisingly, if mothers had to choose between food and education for their children, many said they would rather their children went to school.

At a conference on the enhancement of the socio-economic status of Egyptian women held last week, the findings of the six group sessions, bringing together participants from different socio-economic and educational backgrounds, were discussed. Although issues such as health, politics and rights in marriage were raised, it was the working-class women's contributions on how they saw themselves, their work and education that were most revealing, since they smashed many commonly espoused conceptions about the choices they would make.

Many of the women interviewed, for instance, did not feel there was anything inherently liberating about work. Unlike their middle- and upper-class peers, they did not choose to work; employment had little to do with self-fulfilment and everything to do with economic necessity. Most women who work in the informal sector do not see themselves as working women per se, but as being involved in irregular activities to make ends meet.

They all agreed, however, that their contribution to the family budget gives them a slightly higher status at home. This doesn't mean that they would always choose work if staying at home was a possibility — one divorcée said she left her husband because he insisted that she continue working, when she had just given birth to her first child and wanted to take a year off to concentrate on her baby.

Where do women go for help when the going gets too tough? Charity or loans from a neighbour or close friend. The majority of the women working in the informal sector were conscious of the volatility of their financial situation. Illiteracy also coincided with total ignorance of their rights and the services available to them. Many women, however, were unenthusiastic regarding even those services which are commonly available, such as health-care for instance. Prices of food and medicine, they emphasised, need to be slashed — although their own health was at the bottom of the women's spending priority list.

According to the paper presented by Heba El-Laithi, professor of economics, on the poverty profile of women in Egypt, it was apparent that only 33.87 per cent of female-headed households have some sort of health insurance. The percentage of the poor in female-headed households, furthermore, is about twice that in male-headed households — largely because 82.26 per cent of female breadwinners are inactive or unemployed.

El-Laithi noted that 60.7 per cent of female-headed households in urban areas and 69.81 per cent in rural areas cannot obtain their minimum basic requirements of food and non-food commodities. The battle against illiteracy and the fight to allow girls and women to stay in school are the most important strategies to improve their situation, writes El-Laithi, pointing to the strong correlation in women's ability to provide for themselves and the standard of their education. This, she suggests, should be coupled with free basic education and paralleled with reform in medical insurance policy, restructuring it to take widows and dependents into account. Regular payments on a statutory basis should be provided by the government, not NGOs, for women who are unable to manage on their own, although the latter should facilitate women's access to credit by diminishing the importance of collateral for eligibility for loans, according to the same paper.

A survey analysis of the main strategies adopted to enhance the socio-economic status of women showed that 11.94 per cent of all projects targeting women are involved in income-generating activities. Projects of an educational nature scored highest, at 17.57 per cent, followed by health at 16. 78 per cent and family planning at 9.28 per cent. Serious deficiencies existed in the projects based on feminist activism (0.39 per cent), legal literacy (0.89 per cent) and housing (0.2 per cent) .

More than a fourth of the projects surveyed were carried out by local NGOs; universities and research centres implemented another 23.38 per cent of existing projects. Surprisingly, the government is responsible for only 6.76 per cent, while foreign NGOs have an even smaller share, at 3.94 per cent. The regional distribution of projects is quite even (urban centres receive half the total projects surveyed, while rural areas receive a high 49.78 per cent), although Bedouin women receive minimal attention, with a mere 0.22 per cent implemented in their area. After Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said and Suez, Assiut has the second highest number of projects. Many are centered in Upper Egypt, far more than those focused on the Delta or Sinai. The survey revealed that, among the women commonly targeted by these projects, little attention is given to female street food vendors, the elderly and disabled women, compared to the focus on women in their capacity as mothers and wives.

Many of these projects are funded by foreign institutions, giving rise to fears that, once the money dries up, even staff trained in educating women will become redundant. "The whole operation comes to a halt," in the words of one NGO representative. There are also logistical problems with training women in the informal sector; further, the Social Fund for Development refuses to fund training which is not linked to a specific project, which drastically curtails the number of women who could be realistically helped or that could seek help themselves, another participant observed.

As for women working in the public and private sectors, there were different viewpoints about what measures should be used, especially in the light of revisions to the Labour Code currently being discussed. One such revision aims to restrict the maximum number of maternity leaves women can take to two instead of three — a measure which, some would argue, severely limits the reproductive freedom of women who need to work. An International Labour Organisation representative said that, on the basis of talks held with employers, it appeared that any attempts to expand women's working rights would only represent a further disincentive to hire women. There are, moreover, many loopholes in the existing labour laws: many institutions side-step the law stipulating that companies employing a hundred employees or more must set up a nursery, by hiring only ninety-nine.

A point was also raised about the inadequacy of research programmes directed at women in the agricultural sector, even though they constitute 64.5 per cent of all women living in rural areas.

A comparison between discussions of the survey findings and NGO experiences made it abundantly clear that the gap between measures which would theoretically help women and steps which actually do make a difference needs to be bridged so that female empowerment may mean something more concrete than it does at present.

*Sufra Dayma*

## Chicken — Egyptian way

**Ingredients:**
One chicken (cut in four)
*1/2 kg. fresh tomatoes (blended)*
2 tbsp. tomato paste
One large onion (sliced)
70 gms. leek tips (sliced)
200 gms. garlic (sliced)
2 pods fresh green chili (chopped)
One stalk of thick celery (chopped)
11/2 tbsp white flour
2 cups rice (washed and soaked)
Butter + oil
Salt + pepper + allspice + cardamom + bay leaves

**Method:**
Wash the chicken parts, season and leave them aside. In a cooking pan, melt the butter and stir-fry the onion until slightly yellow. *Add the garlic, stir-fry it gently*, then add the carrots, the leek, the celery, the chili and stir all together. In a frying pan, heat some oil and fry golden the chicken parts. Add them to the vegetable pan and add all the spices plus one cup of boiling water, the tomatoes and one tablespoonful of tomato paste. Leave to cook covered over low heat. In another pan, melt some butter. Add rice and salt, and stir. Strain two cups of sauce from the chicken pan, add them to the rice and cook it the usual way. Pour back the strained vegetables onto the chicken parts. When cooked, remove them from the pan and leave aside.

Sauce: Melt some butter in a small pan, then add the flour and stir only un il yellow. Add the remaining tomato paste plus more of the chicken sauce after straining it. Season the sauce and pour into a serving bowl. Serve aside with the chicken and the rice.

**Moushira Abdel-Malek**

*Restaurant review*

## Crossing the bridge

**Nigel Ryan** negotiates a few obstacles

*The entrance to Chachalaca contains an un*necessary obstacle, a small wooden bridge, wide enough for only one person and actually crossing nothing in particular. One wonders whether it is intended as a conversation piece, is seriously an attempt at interior decoration, or whether it is a form of crowd control.

Bridge negotiated, there are yet more steps to climb should you want a seat at one of the elevated tables. Not that any of this is arduous, it just feels a little tricksy.

Chachalaca is now a Filipino restaurant. "Home of native foods" announces the menu, "ingredient selection and food preparation by first class Filipino chefs". Which all sounds very hopeful.

At one end of the raised portion of the dining room, which was deserted the day we visited for lunch, is a large aquarium containing the kind of black fish that spend all their time attached to the glass of the tank by their mouths. Tables are large, and were it not for the fact that the centre of the restaurant houses a bank of greenery, including a banana tree, it might seem spacious. This was lunchtime, which might explain why waiters, as well as customers, were so thin on the ground.

Menus arrived quickly enough, though, and we duly ordered, but not before asking the waiter what he recommended. The results were variable. Both the mixed seafood soup and the *tinolang manok* — pieces of chicken, on the bone, served in a broth flavoured with ginger — were passable. The soup contained shrimps, calamari, grated carrot, spring onion and green peppers in a light tomato broth, while the *tinolang manok*, though well meant, and containing, it seemed to me, the best part of a chicken was, the quantities of *ginger notwithstanding, really a little bland.*

At Chachalaca, if the kitchen door is open, you know when your food is arriving by the squeak, squeak of the dumb waiter. The kitchens, apparently, are located somewhere in the basement.

The soup was followed by *pancit bihon*, billed on the menu as "noodles special", and *guisado*, which carried the psuedo-explanatory note "tenderloin tips". But be warned, the quantities served at Chachalaca are enormous, and a second course really does require something of a gargantuan appetite.

The noodle dish, comprising chicken, carrot, dried oyster mushrooms, spring onions, shredded lettuce, glass noodles and finely sliced green beans in an unidentifiable brown sauce was a monumentally stodgy heap garnished with two hard boiled eggs and slices of lime. The *guisado*, served alongside a mountain of rice, comprised strips of beef, red and green peppers and onions in a sauce that contrived, once more, to taste of little other than ginger.

Staff are friendly, though not overly attentive.

The whole repast had been preceded by a basket of garlic bread, and was accompanied by a glass of fruit juice. The bill, when it arrived, was LE96. I'm afraid I left the restaurant feeling that perhaps a wiser choice could have been made from the menu, though I suspect it will be some time before I negotiate that little wooden bridge again. The restaurant does, incidentally, do party catering and home deliveries.

*Chachalaca, 22, Taha Hussein Street, Zamalek. Tel: 34 01 969*

**Al-Ahram Weekly**

## *Crossword*

**By Samia Abdennour**

*Across*
1. Write of Psalms (5)
6. Floated (4)
10. Definite (4)
14. Turkish decree (5)
15. Band; seal (4)
16. Pertaining to wings (4)
17. Vacant (10)
19. Travellers' lodging houses (4)
20. Hardy cereal (3)
21. Economise (4)
22. Hereditary (6)
24. Hour, minute or second (4)
25. Ignore correction (4)
26. A ballet position
29. Small lodging places (8)
33. An Asian language (5)
35. Bones forming upper part of human pelvises (4)
36. The Green Isle (4)
37. Alert; vital (5)
38. Invalid (4)
39. Tans, jumbled (4)
40. Control; percept (4)
41. University official with processional duties (5)
42. Scorns (8)
44. Melancholy; torment (6)
45. Excitements (4)
46. Spasms (4)
47. A citrus tree (6)
50. Effortless (4)
51. Weather directions (3)
54. Genus of bitter herbs (4)
55. Unguarded; imprudent (10)
58. Vascular cryptogamous plant (4)
59. Viewed (4)
60. Woody jungle climber (5)
61. Sunrise direction (4)
62. Part of camping equipment (4)
63. Dined (5)

**Down**
1. Antics (4)
2. Pavarotti's forte (4)
3. Extensive (4)
4. Type of fish allied to carp (3)
5. Compactness (7)
6. Rung of ladder (5)
7. Carry on; fee (4)
8. Mimic; parody 93)
9. Deliberate (8)
10. Sanctity (11)
11. Arm-bone (4)
12. Fume; declaim (4)
13. Irish Gaelic language (4)
18. Kept flock; gamble (4)
23. Seine (3)
24. Obvious; evident (11)
25. Captive (5)
26. Improve; seek to remove errors from book (5)
27. A la ...(5)
28. Pseudonym (5)
29. Frustrates (5)
30. Dodge (5)
31. Surface paver; doorkeeper of Masonic lodge (5)
32. Sortie; outburst (5)
34. Indications; leads (5)
37. Felon who deliberately sets fire to property (8)
41. Two wheeler (7)
43. Marital vows, 2 wds (3)
44. Overlook (4)
46. Contaminate (5)
47. Small restaurant (4)
48. Third and last portions of intestines (4)
49. Jutting rocks (4)
50. Utopia (4)
51. Immaculate (4)
52. Hawaiian species of goose (4)
53. British WWII gun (4)
56. Born (4)
57. Inlet of the sea (3)

**Last week's solution**

# Al-Ahram: A *Diwan* of contemporary life

**172** One of the permanent sections of *Al-Ahram* more than 100 years ago was entitled 'Miscellany', and featured human-interest stories, oddities, anecdotes, revelations about the lives of foreigners in high places and other non-political reports. That section was similar in many ways to the back-page magazine section of *Al-Ahram* today. In this instalment of the *Diwan* series, our chronicler, **Dr Yunan Labib Rizk**, offers samples of items published in 'Miscellany' — among them the use of potatoes as a laundry detergent; the ruler who banned cock-crowing; and the small-time king whose official title included an epithet saying he keeps 24 umbrellas in his closets

While 'Letters from Europe' was the column that was generally devoted to news from Europe, there was another column that would feature a variety of other news items from around the world, generally taken from foreign newspapers, magazines and wire services. This column, entitled 'Miscellany', did not appear with the regularity of the other column and, as is implicit in the title, there was no common denominator for the news stories it offered. In this aspect at least it is the precursor to Kamal El-Mallakh's back-page column name 'Without Headlines', perhaps one of the most popular columns in *Al-Ahram* of today. There is cause to suppose that Miscellany met with similar success after its debut towards the end of the last century.

Although Without Headlines appeared "*to gather a flower from every garden*", as the saying has it, an attempt was made to give this bouquet some allure and cohesion. In general, the column distanced itself from purely political affairs and focused instead on events and curiosities pertaining to the lives of famous foreign figures. It was thus lighter in tone and gave the Egyptian reader a window upon that alien realm inhabited by kings and princes in 'the world abroad'. Only rarely did the column contain local events or news about Egyptian figures. These items, after all, had their own place in the newspaper, whether in the column 'Letters from Home' which followed events in the provinces through the eyes of *Al-Ahram*'s various correspondents dispersed throughout the country, or in the column 'Local Events' which covered domestic political and social events and the attendant commentaries.

Of course, they did not have that variety of international luminaries we have today — the array of politicians, intellectuals, artists and stage and screen stars that have been brought vividly into our homes through television and video. The theatre did exist, but it was a form of entertainment restricted primarily to the European-educated elite. News of the stage, therefore, garnered little attention among the editors of Miscellany.

On the other hand, the private lives of royalty were as tantalising to *Al-Ahram*'s readers of a hundred years ago as it is today. Yet, this realm today is now largely restricted to a few dynasties of northern Europe and, of course, to the royal family in Buckingham Palace in particular. Indeed, hardly a day goes by without some news item or other about Diana, Charles, Andrew or Sarah.

Among the curiosities that intrigued the public more than a century ago were the array of titles affixed to the names of certain monarchs. On one occasion, *Al-Ahram* readers were treated to excerpts of a British study of royal titles, featuring for example: "His Majesty, the Shah of Iran, the Brightest Star on the Horizon, the Sun who Illuminates the Earth, the Pole of the World and the Axis of the Globe," and "The King of Afa (a small kingdom on the borders of Afghanistan) who signs himself 'the King of Kings who is obeyed by the entire world, the Protector of All Animals, the Guardian of the Seasons, the Father of the Sun, who has in his closets 24 Umbrellas."

Whether because of the British occupation of Egypt or because the royal family of Great Britain was one of the oldest houses of Europe, *Al-Ahram*'s Miscellany devoted considerable attention to the events that marked the lives of this family. On the occasion of the crowning of King Edward VII in 1901, the newspaper gave a brief summary of his predecessors of the same name: "Edward I, nicknamed Longshanks, who expelled 16,160 Israelites from England;" Edward II who was deposed by parliament in 1327; Edward III, known for "his bravery and valour and who instituted the Grand Order of the Garter"; Edward IV whose reign was beset by civil war; Edward V who was imprisoned in the Tower of London by his uncle, Richard Duke of Gloucester and then murdered at the age of 13 and Edward VI whose brief reign saw intense persecution of Catholics, encouraged by this fanatically Protestant king.

Wilhelm II of Germany stood second in the line of royal luminaries to be featured in the Miscellany column. Not only was he the first emperor to ascend the throne of a united Germany, but he had managed to free himself from the influence of Chancellor Bismark. Clearly the ambitious Welhelm II was an intriguing monarch and it is no wonder that *Al-Ahram*, through it Miscellany column, was interested in every detail of his life.

In a similar vein, Miscellany related the story of the governor of Jacksonville, who, in 1901, was reported to have prohibited the crowing of cocks. "No person in the town is permitted to own more than one cock and that cock must be of an age when it can no longer crow. This governor also forbade dogs on the street after 6pm."

The marvels of science and technology was another theme that gave Miscellany a certain cohesiveness, and the astounding advances in transportation and communications were constant. "The Largest Steamer in the World" announced one headline in this column at the turn of the century. In the summer of 1901, the Celtic was launched on its maiden voyage from Liverpool to New York. "The Celtic is the largest ship that has been built up to the present. It is 700 feet long, 75 feet wide and 49 feet high. It can carry 20,880 tons and can accommodate 2,859 passengers. It has nine decks each of which is reported to be able to accommodate 4,000 soldiers standing side by side." Under the headline "The Fastest Ship", Miscellany comments on the delight with which the French revealed the launching of the Savoy. This ship, "faster than any British or German ship, has crossed the Atlantic from Le Havre to New York in only six days, outstripping both the Philadelphia and the Lukania which are reputed for their great speed.

As records for size and speed were being broken on the high seas, new ground was being broken with the experiments on the world's first submarines. Tests on a new submarine were being conducted in Great Britain, reports Miscellany. "All the ports were sealed after six sailors climbed inside a submarine and for three hours they breathed pressurized air. The results of the experiment were most successful."

*Al-Ahram* readers at the turn of the century were as intrigued by amazing facts and figures as contemporary readers are. Catering to this interest, Miscellany reports, "The power of the machines in Great Britain is equivalent to the force of four thousand million men, or twice the number of the world population. See where steam power has brought us today and imagine where we will be tomorrow with the power unleashed by electricity, many of the secrets of which we have yet to discover."

Miscellany also tantalised its readers with the fantastic and the bizarre. There was one item announcing "a startling discovery": potatoes as laundry detergent. An experiment conducted in Europe demonstrated that after dirty laundry was scrubbed with potatoes and then rinsed, "the clothes came out absolutely pure and spotless."

Medicine and health were another frequent topic of concern to Miscellany readers. At that time, the cause of tuberculosis was still a mystery and on one occasion the column published the curious fact that butchers were less frequently afflicted by this illness than members of other professions. Indeed, according to a doctor, "There was a consumptive who had been in advanced stages of the illness, but who, after engaging in the butcher profession, was suddenly cured of that fatal disease."

The nourishment value of various food items must have held as much interest to readers of a century ago as it does today. At the turn of the century, *Al-Ahram* championed potatoes, citing the testimony of doctors and chemists who "discovered large quantities of nutrients in this vegetable, although in order to retain them it must be baked, for they are lost through frying and boiling."

Romance, too, featured prominently in Miscellany. On 8 January 1903, the column featured a story reminiscent of Romeo and Juliet. The protagonists in this case were the Archduke Leopold, the son of the Hapsburg Emperor, and Mlle. Adamovitch. Although this woman was not the first to capture the heart of the young archduke — she had been preceded by a baker's daughter and an actress — it was she who managed to entice him into marriage. The emperor was vehemently opposed to the marriage, but so strong was the prince's ardour and determination that he relinquished his titles. All was not lost for him however for "under Austrian law he still belongs to the family."

As is customary for such columns designed to amuse the reader, Miscellany would occasionally offer its readers astrological predictions. These items generally accompanied the beginning of a new year, although *Al-Ahram* was careful to present stories of this sort in a jocular light. At the beginning of 1901, the column cited a French astrologer who predicted: "A large house is going to burn down in April, an earthquake will erupt in a city of northern Europe, two senior officials in Paris will die this year, the government will continue its persecution of the clergy, the Pope will die this year, peoples around the world will suffer great distress and hardship and soldiers will travel to far-off parts." If it was the intention of these astrologers to sow panic, they may well have succeeded. We note joking local reaction to similar predictions in one of the few items to appear in Miscellany from local correspondents. In Darshaba in Al-Beheira Governorate, the column announces that "people in this village have fled their homes as a result of the terror spread by rumours that the world was doomed to come to an end on 13 November. In the camps that they set up in the adjacent fields, the villagers prepared a large feast of the finest foods they could obtain and held communal prayers for the salvation of the world and their lives."

Naturally, the editor of the column could not let a story of this nature go by without comment. He added that after the villagers returned to their homes the following day, having discovered that the prediction did not come true, "They found that all their belongings — the furnishings of their homes and their livestock — had entirely disappeared. After mounting searches throughout the village and environs, they realised that the village had been set upon by thieves."

Last but not least, it was customary for Miscellany to offer its readers moral edification. Stories toward this end were taken from sources in both the West and the East. From Great Britain it relayed a story that appeared in a British magazine to the effect that many upper class individuals who had made their fortune through certain trades, were not ashamed to carry on with their trades after being awarded titles. "Lord Rosebery sells milk, Lord Londonderry trades in coal, Lord Harrington is a fruit merchant and the Countess of Warwick is a laundress. It might be useful to draw a quick comparison between these individuals and some of those pseudo-effendis in Egypt, those government functionaries who barely know how to read and write and who view any occupation outside government service as beneath their dignity. And yet, they hold our fates in their hands and we are forced to bow and scrape to their slightest whim."

From the Far East, Miscellany cites ancient Chinese proverbs: "Prisons are closed but full, while the temples of worship are open but empty." "The tongue is a quiver store of delicate turns of phrase and coarse language. Keep the coarse inside until the gentle words are finished." With these and other such adages, *Al-Ahram*'s Miscellany column tempered Western practicality with Oriental wisdom. Indeed, one might suggest that this epitomised the outlook of the editors of the column a hundred years ago and might well characterise the outlook of editors of similar columns today.



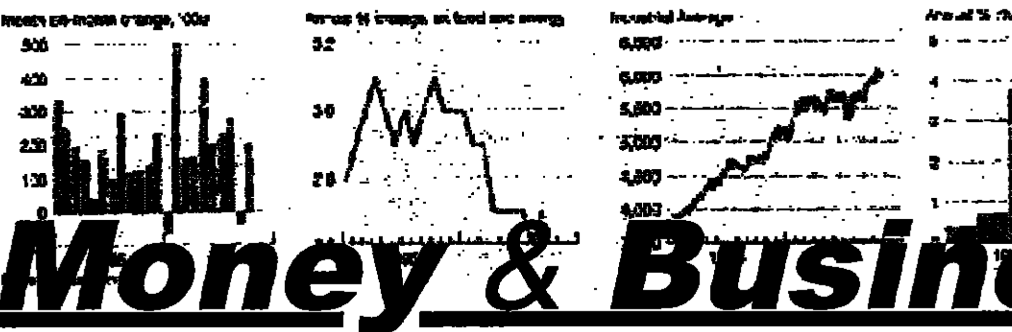
*The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.*

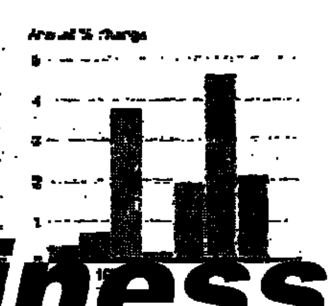
## Bank's deposits surge

THE FOREIGN currency reserves of the Egyptian Central Bank rose to $19 billion by December 1996, with an increase of LE500 million over the previous year.

Ismail Hassan, governor of the Central Bank, indicated that the total volume of deposits at all Egyptian banks, excluding the Central Bank, reached LE186 billion, a marked increase of 11.4 billion over the previous year.

The volume of loans provided by these banks totalled LE143 billion, with an increase of LE14.2 billion. The volume of allocations reached LE20.1 billion, while shareholders' equities totalled LE12.5 billion as of December 1996.



## Export contracts signed

CONTRACTS were signed recently to export Egyptian goods worth $10 million to Tunisia. Signing the contracts on the Egyptian side was Yamani Felfela, chairman of the board of the Egyptian Investment Association.

Felfela explained that the contracts include exporting numerous Egyptian goods such as coke produced by El-Nasr Company, sodium sulfate produced by Imsak in the Fayoum, silicate soda produced by El-Nil Oil and Soap Company and cotton thread by El-Mahalla and El-Sharqiya companies. The first payments for these goods are expected during the last week of March.

## Al-Ahram Computer Exhibition a success

AL-AHRAM Computer and Information Technology Exhibition (ACITEX), which ended a few days ago, witnessed a great success amid a high turnout. The exhibition, organised by Al-Ahram Establishment and the Egyptian Computer Association in cooperation with the Authority for International Fairs. Sponsors included IBM, Xerox, Pack, Blue Max, the National Bank of Egypt, Banque Misr and Egyptian Micro Solutions.

The seminars of the Artificial Intelligence Conference which coincided with the exhibition were also attended by many leading experts in the field. A number of presentations were made on the use of artificial intelligence in a number of fields.




CHRISTIAN Mayer Hofer, Systems Exhibition coordinator in Germany, was here in Cairo to attend Al-Ahram Computer and Information Technology Exhibition (ACITEX) from 26 February - 2 March 1997.

Al-Ahram Establishment and the German-Arab Chamber of Commerce are coordinating with Systems Exhibition officials for future cooperation







CUTTING the ribbon at the opening of ACITEX are (l-r) Ali Ghoneim, general manager of Al-Ahram Establishment and general manager of AMAC; Hassan Hamdi, general manager of advertising at Al-Ahram and general manager of Pyramid Advertising Agency; Hamdi Abdel-Aziz, head of the Academy of Scientific Research; Dr Ahmed Ibada Sarhan, head of the Egyptian Computer Association and Mohamed Youssef Habib, supervisor of the exhibition

## Workers' problems unresolved

THE PROBLEMS facing Egyptians working in Jordan remains unresolved in spite of the approval given by Jordanian authorities to exempt Egyptians working without permits from the penalties imposed on 25 August.

Abdel-Hafez Al-Shakhanba, the Jordanian labour minister, said the penalties, which included a one dinar per day fine, were not implemented because many of the workers were unaware of them and because many others refused to go back home.

Only 70 workers wanted to leave Jordan and return to Egypt. The total number of Egyptian workers in Jordan is estimated at 280,000, of which 100,000 are working without permits, Al-Shakhanba said.

Al-Shakhanba emphasised that the doors must not be wide-open for Egyptian workers to travel to Jordan, simply because the country cannot accommodate all of them. On the other hand, the minister was quick to point out that Jordan depends on Egyptian labour as a vital part of its economy, and because of this, the authorities are working on a way to resolve this issue.

Travellers' book guide

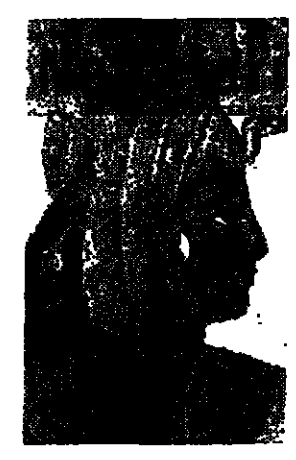
# House of eternity

*THE TOMB of Nefertari* is a new American University in Cairo publication that explains, in vignettes and texts, the story of Nefertari's final journey to immortality. The author, John McDonald, presents a comprehensive guide to the tomb. He relates the meaning of *the myths and funeral rites, describes the life* of this favourite queen of Ramses II and shows how royal tombs were built over 3,000 years ago, including details of the workmen's village at Deir El-Medina — home to the community of men who actually built and decorated the royal tombs.

After the Italian Egyptologist Schiaparelli opened Nefertari's Tomb in 1904, completed clearing it and compiled a photographic record of its marvelous reliefs, it was closed. His 135 plate-glass negatives, which are housed in the Turin Museum, have served as a benchmark ever since.

Now the tomb has been restored and opened to the public, and this new book is on the market. It is ideal for the scholar, interested layman and even the arm-chair traveller who prefers to see close-ups of the reliefs from the comfort of his home.

Thanks to the beautiful illustrations by photographer Guillermo Aldana, "culture vultures" can learn about the exceptional team effort made to restore the tomb by the staffs of the Getty Conservation Institute, the J. Paul Getty Museum and consultants. On the other hand, "save your heritage" enthusiasts will be provided with the details of a nine-year programme of meticulous conservation and monitoring of this marvelous tomb.



The collaborative effort to save *the paintings of* Nefertari's Tomb was carried out between 1986 and 1992. Although the surviving paintings have been rescued with "their historical integrity and authenticity intact," they remain vulnerable (see neighbouring story).

The survival of the paintings will depend on the care taken to protect them in the years ahead. The declared intention to limit access to the tomb and carefully monitor its internal conditions may be adhered to, but the fact remains that every tourist poses a threat, and what is seen and enjoyed today may not survive for our children's children.

John McDonald is an Egyptologist and art historian as well as former associate director of the Yale University Art Gallery. He based this text on his extensive knowledge of Ancient Egypt.

Credit must also go to John Farrell who edited the manuscript and structured many parts to suit both the images and organisation of the book, which contains a unique and attractive layout. He also made the scholarly language of the text accessible to all readers, including an increasingly interested lay audience. *The Tomb of Nefertari* is highly recommended.

*Available from The American University in Cairo Press and at all major bookstores throughout Egypt, it contains 105 illus., incl. 90 colour, and costs LE90.*

Reviewed by **Jill Kamil**



The number of tourists will remain at 150 per day, but concentrated in the morning

Photos: Sherif Sonbol

# Nefertari for a fistful of dollars?

Nowadays, there is considerable talk about the condition of Nefertari's Tomb in the Valley of the Queens. There are many who insist that it should be closed in order to preserve it, while others maintain it should be kept open to the public. **Rehab Saad** looks at both sides of the debate

Nefertari's Tomb was opened to the public only a year ago, in November 1995, after being restored by the Getty Conservation Institute. Before then nobody outside a few Egyptologists and VIPs were allowed to enter the tomb. In the last few days rumours have spread that its condition has already deteriorated and that the number of visitors should be minimised. So far, this has proved to be no more than a rumour, although controversial issues remain.

"No changes have appeared in the Tomb of Nefertari," insists Mohamed El-Saghir, head of Upper Egyptian antiquities, adding that in his opinion granting admission to 150 tourists per day is "very reasonable". Monitoring is conducted daily, using modern instruments, which test the air, temperature and humidity inside the tomb.

*However, as an added safeguard,* the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) has decided to close the tomb "for one month during the summer, when the number of tourists is small, in order to carry out a more comprehensive checkup". Moreover, the SCA has decided to limit admission to the early mornings, "and close the tomb for the rest of the day", explained Secretary-General Ali Hassan. "At present admissions are staggered throughout the day."

He added that there will be more restoration inside the tomb in the future. "Special floors will be installed to suck up the dust so that it does not affect the delicately-coloured reliefs," he said.

Abdel-Halim Noureddin, ex-secretary general of the SCA, insisted that there is no need to worry about the tomb. "Its condition was studied before it was officially opened, and a limit was placed on the number of tourists allowed to enter daily. As long as the readings remain good, why should we deprive people seeing the tomb? *It is, after all, one of the greatest mas*terpieces of Ancient Egyptian art. In any case, keeping the tomb open, while carefully monitoring it, is the best way to preserve it. If we close it, it will simply be neglected," Noureddin added.

Despite guarantees and precautions to preserve the tomb, Ali Radwan, former dean of the Faculty of Archaeology, believes that opening the tomb to the public was a grave mistake. "Antiquities are irreplaceable. It is a tragedy that they have become the target of potentially destructive tourism. Nefertari is one of the masterpieces of art in the history of mankind, not only in Egyptian history. We are going to regret opening it later," he said. He noted that a lot of tourists enter the tomb after long days of travel. "They carry in dust and this naturally affects the walls of the tomb and its colours. Furthermore, the rock of the mountain itself, in which the tomb is engraved is fragile and can*not support large numbers of people. Shall we* destroy Nefertari for a fistful of dollars?" Radwan lamented.

Miguel Angel Corzo, director of the Getty Conservation Institute told *Al-Ahram Weekly* in a telephone interview that two experts from the institute visited the tomb recently and had compared the wall paintings with photographs taken just after completion of the restoration and "found their condition excellent." However, they insisted that the number of visitors should, on no account, exceed 150 per day. "It was also the institute that recommended that visitors should enter the tomb over a period of two hours and the rest of the day should be left for the tomb to rest," he asserted.

So, the question remains: what should those tourists who wish to see Nefertari's Tomb at other hours of the day or during the summer period when it is closed to the public, do? Should a replica tomb be built for them to visit? Egyptologist Angela Milward Jones believes that building a replica tomb is an excellent idea. "In *France they are doing this in the Lascaux caves* which are 17,000 years old and contain more than 1,000 drawings. The French decided to build a replica when it started to deteriorate in the 1940s. Surprisingly, so many people were eager to see the replica tomb, that it had to be restored. Clearly, the idea of seeing a replica tomb is not as abhorrent to tourists as some people suggest."

Corzo, of the Getty Institute, agrees with Jones about the need to build a replica tomb for Nefertari. "It is an excellent idea," he remarked. "There are so many people who want to visit the famous tomb but they cannot because of the limited number allowed; an identical replica would solve the problem, and access to the original tomb could be restricted to archaeologists and historians. After all, people do not go to Egypt just to see Nefertari; they visit other sites and see other attractions as well."

Nefertari's *Tomb was discovered* in 1904 by an Italian mission, but was kept closed until its restoration began in 1986. After the 1952 Revolution, the possibility of restoring the tomb was seriously considered for the first time. Foreign conservators responded immediately. In fact, it became so difficult to decide which organisation was the most qualified to carry out the task, that the decision was postponed year after year.

In 1975, Imelda Marcos, wife of the ex-president of the Philippines, visited the tomb and donated the necessary $1 million to the Egyptian government to save the structure. Subsequently, UNESCO sent scientific missions to study its condition. Actual restoration did not commence until 1986, when the then head of the Egyptian Antiquities Authority (EAO), Ahmed Qadry, began working with the Getty Institute. Restoration continued for seven years at a cost of $6 million. Mrs Suzanne Mubarak inaugurated the tomb in 1993 but it was not opened to the public until November 1995.

*Nefertari, like all royal* personages, *will un*doubtedly continue to make news in the years to come.

## How to get there

### Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

**Super Jet**

Super Jet stations are located in Almaza (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramsis Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurghada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria
Services almost every half hour *from 5.30am to 10pm,* from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter.
A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almaza at 7.15am. Tickets from Almaza LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.

Cairo-Marsa Matrouh
Services at 7am departure and 7pm return from Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE36.
Cairo-Sidi Abdel-Rahman
Services at 6.30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3.45pm. Tickets LE32.
Cairo-Port Said
Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramsis Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said
Service 6.45am, from Ramleh Square in Alexandria. Departs *Port Said 3.30pm.* Tickets *LE22* each way.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almaza. Departs Hurghada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurghada
Service 8pm, from Ramleh Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurghada 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

**East Delta Bus Company**

Buses travel to North/South Sinai Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qulali (near Ramsis Square), Almaza and Tagnid Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassiya Square. Tel. 482-4753.

Cairo-Ismailia
Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qulali, *then Almaza* and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5.25, one way.

Cairo-Suez
Services every half hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish
Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE13, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

Cairo-Nuweiba
Service 8am, from Abbassiya, *then Almaza.* Tickets deluxe bus LE31.

**West Delta Bus Company**

Stations at Tahrir and Almaza. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safaga
Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Quseir
Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor
Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan
Service 5pm. Tickets *LE50* one way.

### Trains

Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramsis Station. Tel. 147 or 575-3555.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan
"French" deluxe trains with sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6.40 am and 8am, Aswan 8.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians, to Aswan LE300 for foreigners; LE141 for Egyptians.
"Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE51; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63; second class LE37.

Cairo-Alexandria
"Torbini" trains
VIP train: Service 8am. Tickets first class LE32 with a meal; LE22 without a meal.
Standard trains: Services 9am, 11am, noon, 5pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE22; second class LE17.
"French" trains
Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE20; second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said
Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class *LE45*; second class LE26.

### EgyptAir

There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check EgyptAir: Adly 390-0999; Opera 390-2444; or Hilton 772410

Cairo-Aswan
Tickets LE351 for Egyptians, LE1143 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Luxor
Tickets LE259 for Egyptians, LE829 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Hurghada
Tickets LE279 for Egyptians, LE898 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Tickets LE287 for Egyptians, LE945 for foreigners, both round-trip.
BP/mg

### Egyptian tourism on the internet

Here are some useful addresses on the internet, including tourism magazines, archaeology and travel agency programmes:

*http:// www.idsc.gov.eg/links.htm* is an address through which you can access other useful tourism addresses on the internet. Here they are:

*http://www.idsc.gov.eg/tourism* is the address of Egypt's tourism net which provides directories of Egypt's hotels, restaurants, cruise lines, travel agents, transportation companies and tourist attractions. Egypt's tourism net is a part of many home pages (culture, health, environment, etc) created by the IDSC as a part of nation's Information Highway.

*http://163.121.10.41/tourism* is the key to Egypt has it all, where Egypt's tourist sites, such as the Red Sea, Cairo, Luxor, Aswan, the Sinai, Alexandria, oases and ETA offices abroad are described. The magazine also contains colour photographs of Egypt.

*http://www.memphis.edu/egypt/egypt.htm* is the address of the University of Memphis, and describes their projects in Egypt.

*http://www-ceg.ceg.vivc.edu/~haggag/travel.html* is the address of Egypt's tours and travel, which organises packages for people who want to take quality tours. It is an Egyptian tour operator, which specialises in tours within Egypt, the Holy Land and the Middle East.

*http://www.geocities.com/TheTropics/7210* is the address of the curse of the Pharaohs. It includes photographs of ancient tombs and temples.

*http://www.ezy.be/horses* is the address of The Arabian Horse Worldwide guide. This guide aims to promote the world's most beautiful and versatile horse — the Arabian.

*http://intercoz.com/egypt* is a 2,000-page magazine, published by the Ministry of Tourism, where all Egyptian tourist sites are listed and described.

Compiled by **Rehab Saad**



# Relics of hundreds of churches

A remote village west of Minya in central Egypt played a much more important role in Egypt's history than hitherto believed. **Samir Naoum** visits a church dedicated to Saint Mina





The church is well below ground level

photo: Samir Naoum

Last year, when a lake south of the village of Taha El-Ameda, 14km west of Minya, was being dragged, 11 gold coins of the Fatimid era were found. Now a church is yielding evidence which makes it increasingly clear that Taha El-Ameda played a much more important role in Egypt's history than was earlier believed.

At one time there were approximately 360 churches in the area of Taha El-Ameda — the centre of a large diocese which included Minya, Malawi, Ahnasia and Ashmounin. It remained an important Christian centre right through to the 12th century when the diocese headquarters moved to Minya itself. The fame of Taha El-Ameda gradually faded, and its churches were subsequently destroyed.

Needless to say, the area does *not attract many visitors.* For those who enjoy venturing off the beaten path, however, it is well worth a visit. The church dedicated to Saint Mina, which lies 3.5m below ground level, is an 18th century structure built over the remains of an earlier church that is believed to have been constructed in the 5th century.

It was described, together with seven other churches, in the *Description de l'Egypte*, written by members of Napoleon's learned team of scholars in the early *1800s. Other churches in the* area were dedicated to the Virgin Mary and the saints Mark, George, Marqorius and Istafanus.

A visitor to the church can easily recognise aspects of the older church. The door leading down to the church has a floral decorated stone lintel which goes back to the 6th century. Above this is an inscription describing restoration that took place during the last century.

The whole structure was built on six columns, four limestone and two basalt. The two basalt columns are inscribed with Corinthian capitals on which the Pharaonic ankh, the key of life, is visible, along with some Greek inscriptions and an abbreviation of the name Christ in Greek.

Some of the domes above the sanctuary and the northern section of the nave are still intact.

The limestone stairs in the northwest corner of the church lead to a lotus-shaped basin, which was used as a baptismal font and dates to the 5th century. A well and second baptismal font stand next to it.

The three sanctuaries in the Church of Saint Mina are dedicated to the saints Mina, Abu Fam of Taha El-Ameda and St George. The date 1758 is inscribed on the iconostasis which is decorated, along with the other walls and sanctuaries of the *church, with 12 ancient icons.* One depicting St Mina dates back to 1232, while another of St Paul, dates to 1516.

The modern church at Taha El-Ameda is dedicated to the Virgin Mary. It was built in 1867 on the western side of the old church. Its *three sanctuaries are dedicated to the* Virgin Mary, Archangel Michael and St Paul. It has two intact columns with Corinthian capitals and in the courtyard are the capitals of more columns which once formed part of the old church.

It appears that Taha El-Ameda was originally built over the remains of a Graeco-Roman town. Archaeologists in the 19th century described the ruins and suggested that the village's original name "Ta'a" was derived from hieroglyphics meaning "the place or site of donkeys".

In fact, there was once a huge storage area for grain where donkeys carrying loads were weighed. The remains of a huge limestone wall, which once encircled the big store, can still be seen, together with additional columns and floral capitals.

The day spent visiting Taha El-Ameda, with its surviving Graeco-Roman columns, early Christian church and site of the discovery of Fatimid coins was a trip back in time — a trip back to a number of times.

هكذا من الأصل



# Basketball fever

The list is growing longer as participants sign up for the upcoming Arab Clubs Basketball Championships in Tunisia. **Nashwa Abdel-Tawab** reports

"Never before in the history of Arab championships have there been so many teams representing Arab countries," said Mohamed Hassanein Omran, president of the Arab Basketball Federation. Omran said he was optimistic that the Arab Championships, scheduled for next month *in Tunisia, would be a close* and exciting competition. Organisers expect that more teams will sign up in the coming week for the competitions. In Beirut last year, only 22 teams participated in the championship.

The eleventh Arab Clubs Basketball Championship for men and the seventh annual for women usually draw the most media attention. All matches will be broadcast via satellite.

Egypt will send two participants to the men's championship: Alexandria's Ittihad — last year's winners — and Zamalek Sporting Club. El-Gezira Club coach Adel Sabri announced his team would not participate as they are insufficiently prepared. Some sources indicated that Ahli, winners of last year's Egypt Cup, will join the competition. The Eastern Tobacco company's team is expected to sign up as well. Their encouraging league performances to date may be a good sign that the team could fare well in the Arab championships.

For the women's championship, Egypt will only send one team — current title-holders Ahli, which is famous for its young powerful recruits. Sports watchers are placing their bets on Ahli again this *year. Last year's runners-up, the Shooting* Club, declined to participate after their star Riham Salahedin defected to Ahli. Alexandria's Sporting team also chose not to participate since more than one key player is pregnant. The team's coach, however, may be reconsidering after bringing on board Shahinaz Nasr from Ahli and Hind Youssef from Zamalek.

Referees for the championships will *include Maged Sayed Mohamed of* Bahrain along with two Europeans. Matches will take place in Nabeul and Hammamet — both of which are Tunisia's basketball homelands.





**Hani Abdel-Moneim (L), and Alaa Zahran (R) representing Ahli team shooting at the net in the last Arab Clubs Basketball Championship** *photos: Amr Gamal*

## Ahli victory

*FOR the first time ever, Ahli* Club thundered towards a tremendous victory at the Arab Clubs Winners Cup football championship in Morocco.

Ahli won after defeating Morocco's Al-Ragaa Al-Baidawi 2-0 in the final minutes of Monday's match. The Egyptian team dashed the hopes of the 50,000 spectators who came to cheer on Morocco. It wasn't until the 43rd minute of the second half that Samir Kammona scored the first goal. In the third minute of extra time, Ahli's Hadi Khashaba's penalty kick became the team's second goal.

During the five-day competition, held from 27 February to 3 March, Ahli defeated Jordan's Al-Faisali 4-0, Morocco's Ragaa Al-Baidawi 2-0 . They lost, however, to Morocco's Olympic Khoreba 2-3.

The champions won $50,000. Hadi Khashba was named best attacker and Essam El-Hadari was best goal keeper.

### Medical passports

MEDICAL experts at a UEFA-sponsored symposium recommended the Europe-wide introduction of medical "passports" for all footballers from youth level upwards.

UEFA said in a statment that the idea was aimed at protecting the health of players, who would be required to have a twice-yearly medical examination. But European football's governing body and medical experts assured that the "passport" would respect patient confidentiality, and said that consultation with players' unions would be necessary before the scheme could come into force.

### Backstroke record

CANADIAN Chris Renaud said he was "shocked" when he realised he had broken the 50m short course backstroke world record at the Canadian Interuniversity Swimming Championships.

Renaud swam the distance in *24.25* seconds, breaking the previous record of 25.13 seconds set in 1993 by the American, Jeff Rouse.

He is the first Canadian to break a world swimming record since Mark Tewesbury broke the 100m backstroke record in 1992. "I was shocked when I looked up at the scoreboard. I couldn't believe I had gone that fast," Renaud said.

### News village

THE EXPECTED 6,000 international media representatives at the 2000 Sydney Olympics will be accommodated at the site of a former hospital near the central Homebush venue in the west of the city, Olympics Minister Michael Knight has announced.

The 50-hectare site at the vacant Lidcombe Hospital, located only four kilometres from Homebush, was in an ideal location to accommodate a large proportion of the written and broadcast media near the Games venue, and would offer media facilities around the clock, Knight said. He added that shuttle buses would transport journalists from the media village to and from the Homebush venue, where the Main Press Centre and International Broadcast Centre will operate.

### Triple jump

CUBA'S Allicar Urrutia has set a new men's world indoor triple jump record with a leap of 17.83 metres at Sindelfingen in Germany. The previous record of 17.77metres was set by Russia's Leonaid Oloshin in France in February 1994.



**Jörg Schomburg, managing director of Deutsche Messe AG, Hannover, in a meeting with Ali Ghoneim, general manager of Al-Ahram Establishment and manager of AMAC. The meeting, which took place at Al-Ahram, was also attended by Ulrich G. Schneider, executive secretary of the Federation of Information and Communications Systems in Germany, and Mona El-Mahdi, representative of Deutsche Messe AG in Egypt**

## CeBIT 97:

## The number one computer exhibition in the world

CEBIT 97, one of the largest computer and *electronics exhibitions in the world, will be held from* 13-19 March 1997 in Hannover, Germany.

Last year's exhibition, CeBIT 96, brought together 6,500 exhibitors from all over the world. For many years the United States, Taiwan, Great Britain, Switzerland, France and the Netherlands have been the most strongly represented countries at CeBIT, displaying their products and services, and exchanging ideas. Last year's exhibition was attended by more than 600,000 visitors.

Among the most important areas that CeBIT 97 will deal with are information technology, network computing, computer integrated manufacturing (CIM), software, consulting and services, telecommunications, office technology, bank technology, security equipment/card technology, and research and technology transfer.

Jörg Schomburg, *managing director of Deutsche* Messe AG, Hannover, on a visit to Cairo, met with Ali Ghoneim, general manager of Al-Ahram Establishment and manager of AMAC, to promote CeBIT 97.

# High stakes in Africa

As early round matches in the major African club competitions kick off this weekend, **Eric Asomugha** checks team scorecards

As the African club competitions get underway this weekend, Egypt will attempt to defend two of three titles won last season. Zamalek, African Champions Cup winners, will represent Egypt along with Arab Contractors, African Cup Winners' title-holders, and Mansoura, the new national cup winners.

The African Champions' Cup competition, renamed the CAF Champions League Cup, is expected to be the most exciting scene of competition as all participants vie for a place in history as the revamped competition's first winners. For Zamalek, making history is nothing new and winning the first CAF Champions League Cup is the team's number one priority. Zamalek has won the Champions Cup four times previously — most recently in December — and the Super Cup twice — most recently in February.

Zamalek's first test will be against Ethiopia's Saint George team. If the past is any indication, Zamalek should emerge victorious. But their recent 1-1 draw with Ethiopian opponents in Addis Ababa is enough for Zamalek to proceed with caution. Last season, the Ethiopian champions were defeated 3-1 early on by Sfaxien of Tunisia.

The 16 matches slated for this weekend in the Champions' League include Mouloudia of Algeria, which will host Desportivo Travadores of Cape Verde Islands. The new force in Nigerian soccer and league champions Udoji United will play their first continental match at home against Kaloum Stars of Guinea. Ascontonchad of Chad will travel to Côte d'Ivoire to meet African Sports who are making an appearance after a long absence.

Former Champions Cup and Super Cup holders, Orlando Pirates of South Africa, who replaced league champions Kaizer Chiefs, await the visiting Romaa Rovers of Lesotho. Kaizer Chiefs withdrew due to financial reasons. Both *Raja of Morocco* and Club African of Tunisia will play home matches against Sonasco Diourbel of Senegal and Djoliba of Mali.

In the African Winners' Cup where 16 matches are also to be decided this weekend, the Egyptian representatives will play their first matches away from home. Defending champions and Super Cup finalist Arab Contractors will slug it out with Mumias of Kenya in Nairobi. Newcomers Mansoura face their southern neighbour and veteran African competitors Al-Merriekh of Sudan.

Other notable names in the Winner's Cup race include 1995 finalists Julius Berger of Nigeria, who travel to meet UNB of Benin, RAF of Morocco against Real *Bamako of Mali, Etoile* Sahel of Tunisia hosting Etoile Filante of Burkina Faso, Racing of Cameroon against Umeme of Uganda and Mouloudia Oran of Algeria searches for glory in Senegal against US Goreenne.

Dragons Kinshasa of Zaire will face Renaissance from Chad. The Dragons will take nothing for granted as they look forward to improving the performance of their predecessor Sodigraf, who remained undefeated in the competition last year before been humbled 4-0 in the final by Arab Contractors.

## Football follies

FOLLOWING a series of humiliating draws against supposedly easy African opponents, and a crushing 2-0 loss to Kuwait two weeks ago, the Egyptian Football Federation appointed Mahmoud El-Gawhari to coach the national football team after firing its two head coaches. Farouk Gaafar and Mahmoud El-Khatib. Both men, who have lately come under fire for their inability to sufficiently motivate, manage and train the team, were released from their duties after EFF officials became increasingly concerned about Egypt's chances to even qualify for the finals of the 1998 World Cup in France and the 1998 African Nations Cup in Burkina Faso.

El-Gawhari, who took Egypt, for the first time in 56 years, to the World Cup finals in 1990 and has served as the Egyptian national team's coach three times in the past and is currently coaching the Omani national team, is expected to arrive in Cairo on 28 March, just nine days before a crucial World Cup qualifying match against Liberia.

Edited by **Inas Mazhar**

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## Mohieddin El-Labbad:

His is a language of familiar beasts and the strangeness of everyday's imaginary adventures

# Hast thou slain the Jabberwock?

At first, one is really impressed by his unusual size. Mohie El-Labbad is not fat — far from it — he is just... well, big. He was obviously born, not to be restricted in cramped modern apartments, but to move freely in the outdoors. "I come from real peasant stock," he says. "Where I come from — a village in the Delta — they are all large and very tall, with huge hands and ears." His own hands and ears are strangely delicate for such an oversize frame. "The genes have started evolving with me," he jokes. "I was also the first in my village to wear trousers and a shirt. It was unheard-of before my time." He is in the vicinity of sixty, he hastens to say, and adds that his father and a number of older men he knew when he was young, considered sixty a landmark. Several times during the conversation, he ironically attributes things that he is doing — or not doing — to age. Surprisingly, considering his size, El-Labbad moves gracefully around the small rooms of his apartment. There is a pleasing economy of movement: he does not speak with his hands or fiddle with papers or objects on his desk. In one instance, he needs a book to make a point but a cursory glance at his shelves informs him that it is not handy. "I will look for it later," he says. Granted, the rooms have been adjusted to allow him maximum space. The furniture is sparse, almost Spartan. Sofas and chairs are inconspicuous. No fixtures and fittings hinder his progress; nor do frivolous knickknacks clutter side tables and shelves. The only focus of the apartment is his large working table, covered with books overflowing from the bookshelves built on each side. There are papers, drawings, catalogues and posters. The books are in many languages; French, English, German, Arabic: Literature, poetry and, most of all, books on graphic design, drawing and cartoons. Many are on visual arts. Visible on one shelf is a thin tome on the origin of books. Apart from the stereo system, the only other items which are not immediately related to El-Labbad's profession, passion and hobby hang on the walls: a series of masks representing heads, with birds in the place of eyes or a caterpillar crawling in the space where one should have expected a nose. One face has been all but absorbed by the features of a deer. Neither human nor animal; in the process of undergoing a strange mutation, human absorbed by beast or the other way round, the creatures do not invite close examination by the squeamish.

On the other wall, a small white skeleton sports unusually shiny eyes which, from time to time, are lit with, one is tempted to think, a sardonic gleam. Clearly, El-Labbad's imagination does not thrive on ordinary fare and it comes as no surprise when he says that Lewis Carroll is one of his favourite authors, "but I like him best in the first version of *Alice in Wonderland, Alice's Adventures Underground;* there is a difference, you know." The first version of *Alice* has, for El-Labbad, the further advantage of appearing in handwriting rather than ordinary print, giving the impression that Carroll has just penned it down. El-Labbad likes the visual aspect of handwriting and one can just see how his imagination would be fired by the sign language, the magic changes in Alice's size and the symbolism of it all. The little bottle around the neck of which "was tied a paper label with the words 'Drink Me' beautifully printed on it in large letters" must have added to his attraction to the work. El-Labbad loves labels, logos, signs and messages, a sort of language which transcends all languages. One of his books is entitled *Language Without Words: Marks, Signs and Symbols.* "Since the time when man stood upright, giving him the freedom to use his hands and fingers with a degree of proficiency," El-Labbad writes, "he has tried to use drawn signs to express his feelings about his life and about his environment, his thoughts, joys and fears; his hopes for, and apprehension of, the future...and, with the passing of time, humans managed to make these signs understood by other humans. This is how communication was born, long before a written or spoken language existed." Although El-Labbad readily concedes that any sign language is culturally biased, he insists that it is easily understood by all. In the preface of *Language Without Words*, he presents his book "to beginners, learning the new language, a language whose meaning is understood at first glance by everyone, in the same way, without confusion: It is a language written, not in letters and words but with shapes, lines and colours."

El-Labbad cannot recall when his interest in graphic design was first sparked. Nor, for that matter, does he remember how he found out about books. There were not many lying around his parents' house, after all. "I produced my first real book when I was four," he says, as if it was the most natural activity in the world for toddlers, especially those born in a village where relatively few people were literate. "It was a real book, complete with pages and signs on the pages. I stitched it together myself, and carried it around wherever I went. My parents thought that my interest in books would lead me to become a doctor. They did not know any other profession which required one to be literate. One was a peasant, or, if one had the chance to have an education, one became a medical practitioner. This was the extent of their experience. My father never got over my refusal to embrace such an honourable profession. He often brought it up when he had a chance, introducing me as 'my son, who could have been a doctor'. When I first went to Cairo, I already knew what I wanted to do, but I also knew that there were no schools for it. So, for want of anything better, I enrolled in the School of Fine Arts. Learning to draw was not a bad thing and besides, I was interested in all the alternative means of expression." El-Labbad deplores the fact that, even now, there are no institutes or even departments in university where graphic design is taught formally. "Even overseas, there is a sort of confusion; graphic design is inextricably linked to advertising, and while its commercial value is constantly researched and enhanced, its cultural and artistic values are ignored. Yet apart from being the most basic mode of expression, it is much richer than word languages and could, if properly developed, become an invaluable mode of communication between people who do not speak the same language or share similar cultures."

Like many artists of his generation, he found his way to *Rose El-Youssef* and political cartoons. With Hegazi, Jahin, Bahgat, Bahgory and a few other gifted artists, he contributed greatly to the popularity of the magazine. Sarcasm or black humour, however, were never his trademarks; rather, he used a gentle irony to convey his message. If he felt that all was not well in the realm of Denmark, there was no bitterness, only a humourous wink and a gently nudge. But cartoons, he says, were just one means of expressing his ideas. There were many others, which allowed for more freedom of the imagination, more creativity. Without leaving *Rose El-Youssef*, he turned to making books for children — or their parents, who could peruse them with delight under the pretext of reading them to the little ones — which gave him a chance to air his opinions on a number of important topics. He could use and combine drawings, pictures and the written word in a thousand meaningful sketches. He told stories with collages of unrelated figures and images which suddenly made overall sense and devised pictorial educational messages for his young readers. He stepped up his research, avidly devouring piles of magazines, photographs, stamps, pictures, logos, posters and slogans. He cut, pasted and filed. He used the thousands bits and pieces collected over the years in many different combinations to convey his ideas. There were so many things with which to make up his new language. He read fairy tales and poured over foreign literature for children. He examined the logos popular on T-shirts here and elsewhere. He drew on folklore and everyday events. He came up with a series of books so full of wisdom and at the same time so creative that, although conspicuously addressed to children, they have become favourites with grown ups enchanted by the simplicity of text and the poetry expressed by the illustrations.

Although he never mentions awards or kudos, his book, *Kashkul El-Rassam* ("The Artist's Notebook") won the Golden Apple in 1989 at the International Children's Book Biennale in Bratislava (Czechoslovakia) and *Language Without Words* won a prize in the competition for the best children's book in Leipzig in 1995 as well as a medal of honour at the Frankfurt Children's Book Exhibition, the same year. His caricatures are famous in Europe among those who have attended the yearly exhibitions at the Museum of Caricatures in Bologna.

Through his books, El-Labbad addresses all the topics dear to his heart, and a few of society's problems. If he aims at teaching, he does it lightly, to complement the artistic composition. In *Mulahadhat* ("Remarks"), he touches on the basics of drawing, on how to use light and shade for better effects and how one can combine several media to serve expression. He uses Apollinaire's poem *La Cravate* to illustrate one of his points: "After some contemplation we can observe that writing is a kind of drawing and that drawing is a kind of writing." He then explains how the Arabs discovered that they could combine writing and drawing to produce beautiful samples of calligraphy with verses of the Qur'an written in the shape of birds and lines of poetry fashioned into wild animals, luscious fruit and handsome faces. "Centuries later, the French poet, in an attempt to renew poetry and add excitement to the genre, had rediscovered the same principle," he comments. In *Kashkul El-Rassam* , he shows how each animal within the same species is different, and encourages children to regard well-known beasts with a new eye, each time producing their own perception of the familiar. These days, El-Labbad mulls over the beginnings of books. He fears that the advent of high-tech will deprive children of many of the skills which gave him so much joy. Is he disappointed? He remains non-committal, but one is left with the impression that, somewhere along the line, he has discovered some special knowledge, inaccessible to others, and that the joke, really, is on them. Leaving El-Labbad, one is tempted to imagine that, having closed the door on his visitors, he walks softly, agile as a grizzly, back to his desk, which overlooks one of the last quiet streets of Heliopolis, mischievously whispering to himself the famous verses of Lewis Carroll:

"You' re old, father William," the young man said,
"And your hair has become very white;
And yet you incessantly stand on your head —
Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

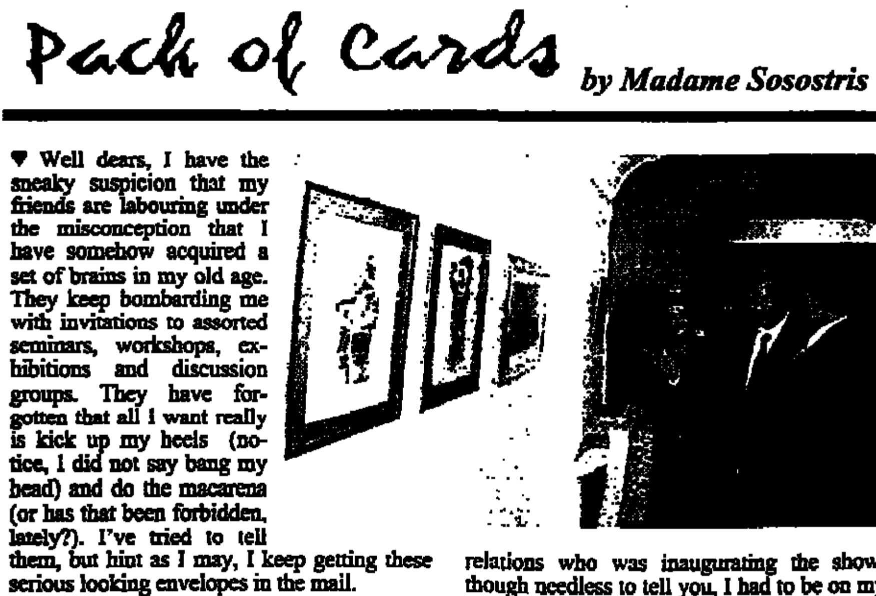
"In my youth," father William replied to his son,
"I feared it might injure the brain;
But, now that I am perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again."

*Profile by* **Fayza Hassan**



## Pack of Cards

*by Madame Sosostris*



♥ Well dears, I have the sneaky suspicion that my friends are labouring under the misconception that I have somehow acquired a set of brains in my old age. They keep bombarding me with invitations to assorted seminars, workshops, exhibitions and discussion groups. They have forgotten that all I want really is kick up my heels (notice, I did not say bang my head) and do the macarena (or has that been forbidden, lately?). I've tried to tell them, but hint as I may, I keep getting these serious looking envelopes in the mail.

That is not to say that serious matters cannot be fun. Take our own **Makram Henein**'s drawing exhibition for instance: It was a real pleasure standing next to **Mohamed Ghoneim**, first undersecretary for foreign culture relations who was inaugurating the show, though needless to tell you, I had to be on my best behaviour with so many dear colleagues from *Al-Ahram* attending. Makram's works were quite stimulating really and were worth the effort of keeping my mouth shut and my eyes open, for a change.